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ECCLESIOLOGY

EDITORIAL

KOINONIA / COMMUNION AS THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL PERESTROIKA IN VAT II - Joseph Kallarangatt
EASTERN AND WESTERN CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA - Xavier Koodapuzha
THE CHURCH IN THE CHURCHES: A SYRIAC ECCLESIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE - Koonammakkal Thoma Kathanar
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Editorial

Greetings to the Major Archbishop Mar Antony Cardinal Padiyara

Christian Orient is indeed happy to convey our prayerful greetings to the Major Archbishop Mar Antony Cardinal Padiyara and the Syro-Malabar Church as a whole. The Syro-Malabar Church which is as old as Christianity itself in India has every right to feel happy at this hierarchical development. It is a bearing testimony of the dynamism and growth of this Church. Leadership grows from within and it is the flowering and fruition of the ecclesial life. Hence we look at this development as the natural fulfilment of the aspirations of the forefathers, who kept aloft their Christian faith, ecclesial patrimony and Catholic communion.

We are grateful to the Petrine See of Rome for conferring the Major Archiepiscopal status to the Syro-Malabar Church. It is indeed an expression of the concern of the Holy See for fostering the unity and catholicity of the churches.

The Vatican II has rediscovered the true nature of the Church as the communion of churches. This rediscovery leads us to greater sharing in the universal mission of the Church. The Catholic Church consists of individual churches which are equal in their rights and obligations. They are united in the same faith, sacraments, and hierarchical communion but different in liturgy, spirituality, discipline, theology, administrative set up etc. The diversity in no way harms her unity but rather manifests it. The legitimate diversity within the Church is a sign of the eternal harmony of the Triune God. It is a *perichoresis* of opening oneself and flowing into the other. It is a dynamic process of the sharing of the eternal love communicated to the creation so that the humanity divinely called to become its most sublime expression may bloom in mutual love and harmony.

The Specific hierarchical structure of an individual church is to protect and promote the identity, and venerable traditions enshrined in it. Fidelity to the authentic sources is a *sine qua non* for the ecclesial identity and meaningful leadership. The leadership of a Church becomes relevant, credible and authentic only when it is in full harmony with and rooted in its heritage. Authority and leadership do not consist in arbitrary assertions devoid of ecclesial roots! It becomes genuine and ecclesial in proportion to its absolute fidelity and unflinching allegiance to the venerable patrimony. The following directive principle given successively by the Popes Paul VI and John Paul II should echo in the hearts of the leaders of the individual churches: "they (should) take pains to return to their ancestral traditions" if in certain ones "because of circumstances of times and personages they have improperly

fallen away from them" (Introductory guideline given by Pope John Paul II for the new code of canons for the Oriental Churches).

As the history teaches there is the constant possibility of being tempted to view the Church and its set up in secular terms. The words of the Lord "My Kingdom is not of this world" ever rings in the Church as an eternal monitor. We are sure that the Syro-Malabar Church will certainly view this hierarchical set up as a call for greater ecclesial life. Jesus Christ is the head of the Church and the whole hierarchical structure is a stewardship. There is only one Master, one *Kyrios*. The stewards have to prove their reliability and credibility by their absolute fidelity to the only Master, Jesus Christ. This fidelity is not a mere abstract conceptual reality but something which can and should be proved by word and witness. It is our prayer and wish that the new leadership structure be an effective expression of the eternal harmony where God the Supreme Authority manifested Himself through His Son to restore and build up the divine communion. It is a self effacing service of spending oneself for others, for the building up of the Body of Christ.

The Churches of the Thomas Christian tradition have special reason to feel happy, as it opens up a new ecumenical dimension. The Thomas Christians were all of the same faith and same communion upto the 16th century. But later they came under the prelates of the Latin Church and the Church which had been one and united for sixteen centuries was disastrously divided. They were craving for bishops who would respect their ecclesial patrimony and identity. It took three centuries for them to get bishops of the same Church and it might still take time to rediscover the lost identity. It is an occasion granted by divine providence for all the Churhes of the St. Thomas tradition to think of their common bond and heritage which unite them rather than those which separate them.

The unity of the Church and ecclesial communion are not the products of human intelligence but the results of the working of the unifying Spirit of God. Let us submit ourselves to the uniting and abiding Spirit of the Lord so that He may build up our bonds from above and make us His effective expressions of love, communion and harmony.

We wish the new Major Archbishop every success and convey our prayerful greetings so that the Church of the Thomas Christians may under the new leadership become *effective witness of its unique mission in love and harmony.*

Xavier Koodapuzha
Editor

Koinonia / Communion as the Ecclesiological Perestroika in Vat II

1. Introduction.

This study represents a theological assessment and an evaluation of koinonia/communion as it is envisioned in the documents of the second Vatican council. The theological slogan 'going back to the source' (ressourcement) enabled the theologians to re-establish the original nature of the church as communion. During the first millennium, the church was primarily understood as a sacramental and spiritual reality. The one church of God was a communion of 'saints' realized in the communion of churches. The juridicism and the material superfluity of the second millennium aptly matched its territorial insistence and spiritual emptiness. Thus the 'powerful' church of the middle ages was suffering from an awful 'poverty'. Vatican II from its part made a concerted effort to return to the 'homeland' from the foreign land i.e. a return from the external, juridical categories to the biblical, patristic, liturgical and historic bases of theology and church life. It is a going back to the qualitative dimensions of the ecclesial life. Thus, the basic sources or the formative matrix of an ecclesiology are once more traced out. The expression 'church as communion' concretely materializes this return to the very ancient, original and primordial character of the church of God. This is the principle of per-

stroika, reconstruction, and re-structuring, that the council has made use of. As far as ecclesiology is concerned, this return in order to be genuine and proper, must be one made to the three home-lands i. e. to the syriac, greek, and latin world. When we say the church is a communio of churches, it should be a communion of these three poles—syriac, greek and latin. Is the communion ecclesiology of Vat II properly rooted in homeland? The intent of this study is to highlight the importance of communion and of the syriac pole.

2. Koinonia as Theological Perestroika.

A re-structuring and re-construction in the field of ecclesiology was an imperative. The council fathers tried their best to re-formulate the theology of the church and to bring out a theological perception which is more substantial and saturated than the one prevailed during the second millennium. This renewed theology of the church has taken the form of communion. Koinonia is the central theme of Vat II and already much have been written on that. It is impossible to speak of any ecclesiological theme without connecting it with the aspect of koinonia. It is an integral, all-pervading and multivalent category in the documents of Vatican II.¹ Instead of a mere universalistic, western, papal

1. K. McDonnell, "Vat II (1962-1964); Puebla (1979); Synod (1985); Koinonia / Communion as an Integral Ecclesiology" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 25 (1988), 400 ff.

sacral, hierarchic, monolithic, polemic and juridical ecclesiology, Vat II brings out the revolutionary notion of the church as communion.² Koinonia is Vat II's centre of constructing an ecclesiology of communion. It should be the centre of our perception of the church today. Thus it is the guiding idea, the organizing principle, and the dominant concern of the council. Koinonia is not a mere image or model of the church. It is a theological principle which is indicative of a profound biblical spirituality, eucharistic centrality and internal life.³ It points to the primary level reality and a high level integration. Thus the church has discovered certain of its deepest ecclesiological notions in the theology of koinonia.

Well known ecclesiologists are of the opinion that the word koinonia does not have originally anything to do with the structure of the church. At the earliest time, it was an allusion to the 'real thing' of the church. What is actually the church in her most substantial core of being? According to Vat II the mystery of the church is the mystery of communion in the following way. We are created according to the will of the Father. It was a calling to share and participate in his divine life (LG 2). In Jesus Christ, this communion is materialized. In Him God assumed human nature so that we may share the divine life. (LG 2)⁴. The fellowship with God realized through Christ and Spirit serves as the bedrock for the fellowship of the church. In the theological language,

we can say that the church is the icon of the trinity. Hence our idea of God is more fundamental and constitutive to that of the church. Church is a subordinate reality. God is a communion of three persons. This ecclesial communion is the natural result of this primordial communion. The vision of God as trinity is an imperative to probe into an ecclesiology of communion. The church is a communion according to the image and likeness of the trinitarian communion. The church comes of the trinity, and returns towards the trinity and is structured according to its image.⁵

Communion is basically a participation in the life of God. From the theological point of view, communion has a primary and secondary meaning. In the primary sense it is the common participation in the salvation achieved by Christ in the Spirit. That means it is a communion and participation in the triune God. It also means communion in the divine goods (1 Cor 10:16). It is the sharing of the one reality held in common. In the related or secondary sense koinonia means the bond of fellowship or the community that emerges out of our union with God. It is the primary communion that makes possible this secondary communion. Triune communion is the precondition for the ecclesial communion.⁶ As Congar says: "In its most general sense, koinonia means the situation where someone shares something with others. Fundamentally it is the communion which the believers have with Christ; then it is the comm-

2. A. Dulles, "Catholic Ecclesiology Since Vat II: Synod 1985 An Evaluation", *Concilium* (1986), 11-12.
3. W. Kasper, *Theology and Church* (London: 1989), 149.
4. Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 151-152.
5. Bouo Forte, *L'Eglise: Icône de la Trinité. Bréve ecclésiologique*. (Paris: 1985) 33.
6. J. M. R. Tillard, "The Church of God is a Communion. The Ecclesiological Perspectives of Vat II", *One in Christ* 17 (1981), 117 ff.

unity of the christian goods, the faith, the body and blood of Christ (I Cor. 10:16), the Spirit (II Cor. 13:13). Finally, it is the community which they form together because of all of these elements. Being in communion with God they are in communion with each other. Communion is the reality of full christian life”⁷ Koinonia emphasises the interior value which accounts for the unity, which one shares in common. One communes in something or in someone. It is radically different from ‘society’ which designates the exterior bond, the network of relation. This becomes clear when we compare the theology of the primitive church and that of the second millennium.

By the primitive church we mean not any organized and structured church, but the very christian life of the people itself. It is the people and their life that constitute the church. It is through the eucharistic celebration that the early church had maintained its eclesial identity.⁸ The early christian communities actually lived the life of communion. But in the second millennium we see that the radical link between the eucharist and the church were lost. Instead of the eucharistic ecclesiology (eucharist builds the church) of the early centuries, in the middle ages eucharist was celebrated in the church as one of the sacraments. Instead of the early liturgical theology, we have juridical and hierarchical

theology. Church life and practice were cut off from the biblical basis and liturgical spirituality. The natural result is the understanding of the church as a social and hierarchical structure.⁹ “The people of God are subjected to the body of Christ; the charism is made subordinate to the institution, inner freedom to imposed authority; prophetism to juridicism, mysticism to scholasticism, the laity to the clergy, the universal priesthood to the ministerial hierarchy, and the college of the bishops to the primacy of the pope”.¹⁰ When ecclesiology was written without eucharistic and liturgical basis, naturally it was cut off from the pneumatological basis also. There is no proper ecclesiology without a genuine anthropology (people of God) and a sound pneumatology (theology of the Spirit). As the Late Patriarch Athenagoras says: “Without the Holy Spirit, the church is simply an organization, authority a matter of domination, mission a matter of propaganda, the liturgy no more than an invocation. But in the Spirit, the church shows forth the communion of the trinity, authority is a liberating service, mission is pentecost, liturgy is both memorial and anticipation”.¹¹

It is in the 19th century theological and liturgical renewal, initiated by J. A. Möhler, that people become aware of what the church lives from. The church was again understood as

7. Y. Congar, *L'Eglise une, sainte, catholique et apostolique*, in *Mysterium Salutis* vol 15 (1970), 57.
8. M. Fahey, “Ecclesiae sorores ac Fratres: Sibling Communion in the Pre-Nicene Christian Era”, *CTSAP* 36 (1981), 15–38. Cf. also, Fahey, “Ecclesial Community as Communion” *The Jurist* 36 (1976), 4–23; R. Kress, “The Church as a Communion: Trinity and Incarnation as Foundation of Ecclesiology”, *The Jurist* 37 (1976), 127–157. Cf. also The Fourth Ecumenical Consultation Between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, in *Wort und Wahrheit* Dece. 1978.
9. Kasper, *Theology and Church*, 155.
10. V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (London: 1957), 156.
11. P. Athenagoras, Cf. *Tablet* (1971) 585–6.

a communion in the Spirit. The proper liturgical basis for theology has again entered into the scene. It is actually here that we see the starting of the slogan, 'going back to the source'. Speaking about the ecclesiology of the middle ages, Cardinal Ratzinger remarks: "If previously the church had been seen above all as structure and organization, the insight that emerged now was that we ourselves are the church. It is more than an organization. It is the organ of the holy Spirit. It embraces us of within."¹² Vat II in its basic documents tried to incorporate this ecclesiology of the people of God which is known as an ecclesiology of communion.

3. **Koinonia Intertwines the Various Ecclesiological Themes.**

In the documents of Vat II we see a renewed ecclesiology. This renewed actuality of the church in the shape of koinonia expresses itself as a multi-dimensional reality. The re-constructed ecclesiology has to be seen primarily in its proper theocentric basis. The church is seen as the church of the triune God where both the Spirit and Christ are working together. "The Church shines forth as a people made one with the unity of the Father, Son and holy Spirit" (LG 4). Here we have trinitarian, christological and pneumatological ecclesiologies. It also speaks explicitly that the church is the people of God. This theological basis of the church is intertwined with the biblical basis. A number of biblical imageries are made use of (LG 6-8) to explicate the church as a biblical reality. This biblical and theological basis of the church were

properly kept in the eucharistic celebration of the early church. "The image of the church which emerges as early as Ignatius of Antioch is that of a bishop, surrounded by presbyters, deacons and the faithful celebrating the one eucharist and one altar. They form a communion".¹³ The early church understood itself as a communion of different churches. This eucharistic ecclesiology is the basis of the theology of the one church of God as the communion of different churches. Leaving aside the triumphalistic views of the universal church, the council admitted the identity of different apostolic churches (LG 23, OE 2-5) and there by the equality of these churches also. The relation between the local church and the universal church is tied up to the relation between the bishop and the pope or in the context of the relation between the episcopal college and the primacy of the pope. Hence the theology of collegiality and conciliarity become essential parts of the communion ecclesiology of Vatican Two. "Communion is the bond that unified bishops and the faithful, the bishops among themselves, and the faithful among themselves; a bond that was both effected and at the same time made manifest by eucharistic communion".¹⁴ Aspects of unity, catholicity, apostolicity, holiness, sacramentality, mystery, and ecumenism are also to be studied and assessed in the context of communion. This communio in Vat II is actually an all-pervading theological principle and a hermeneutic reality by which one has to evaluate the ecclesiology of Vat II. No other category in theology offers the possibility of such an integral ecclesiology.

12. Cardinal J. Ratzinger, Church, Ecumenism and Politics. (England: 1988), 3
 13. McDonnell "Vat II", 404-5.
 14. L. Hertling, Communion: Church and Primacy in Early Christianity (Chicago: 1972) 16.

As McDonnell succinctly remarks: "The documents of Vat II made significant use of *koinonia*, communion, as the way of speaking about revelation, identifying the mystery of the church, portraying the rootedness of the church in the trinitarian history, specifying the eucharistic mode that structures the church's life determining the ecclesiastical and juridic relationship within that ecclesial reality, describing the bond between the pilgrim church and the heavenly church of the saints and finally, envisaging the goal of the ecumenical endeavour".¹⁵ Thus it is clear that *koinonia* is a theological category that radically reinterprets the theology of the church, and a category by which all the ecclesiological themes are to be studied and evaluated.

4. Vat II has made a Homeland Return

Fixing the theological accent on the proper sources, the fathers of the council attempted at a renewal of the theology of the church. Some of the highlights of that ecclesiology are:

a) The Church means churches.¹⁶ The council brought forward the fact that the universal church is a communion of different churches. This is one of the dominant themes of the ecclesiology of the council (OE 2-4; LG 13, 26, UR 14-18, AG 22, SC 11, 13, CD 11, 23, 28, 36). When we say that the catholic church is a communion of different churches, it includes,

patriarchal churches, Majorarchepiscopal churches, metropolitan churches, and other *sui juris* churches headed by a hierarchy of a lesser grade.¹⁷

b) The council explains what the church is and in what lies the communion. "The Church is made up of the faithful who are organically united in the holy Spirit through the same faith, same sacraments and the same government. (OE 2). These factors show that there is a church. The Church as the people united in the Spirit is the foundational ecclesiological theme of Vat II.

c) This ecclesial communion is a unity in diversity.¹⁸ This diversity is characterized by its apostolic origin, liturgy, theology, spirituality and discipline. "By the divine providence it has come about that various churches, established in diverse places by the apostles and their successors have in the course of time coalesced into several groups, organically united, which, preserving the unity of faith and the unique divine constitution of the universal church enjoy their own discipline, their own liturgy, and their own theological and spiritual heritage. Some of these churches, notably the ancient patriarchal churches which are parent stocks of the faith, have begotten others as daughter churches (LG 23). These churches have an obligation to be different in order to be genuinely churches. The distinctive and constitutive principles of church's existence and identity are to be seen here.

15. McDonnell, "Vat II", 401.

16. Cf. X. Koodapuzha (ed), *Communion of Churches* (KTM: 1993); A. Dulles, "The Church, Churches and the Catholic Church", *Theological Studies* 33 (1972), 199-235.

17. Details, Cyrill Mar Baselios, *The Holy Catholic Church as the Communion of Churches* (EKM: 1993), 9-10.

18. Cf. M. Vellanickal, "Biblical Theology of the Individual Churches", *Christian Orient* 1 (1980), 5-19; X. Koodapuzha, "Ecclesiological Perspectives of the St. Thomas Christians", *Christian Orient* 8 (1987), 53-78.

d) In these churches the catholicity is concretely realized. "In these communities, though frequently small and poor, or living far from other, Christ is present. By virtue of him the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church gathers together" (LG 26). "This variety of local churches..... is particularly splendid evidence of the catholicity of the undivided church" (LG 23). This ecclesiology has been articulated in the relation between the bishop and the eucharist. This is the striking reality of the early church. "For a return to the communion ecclesiology of the first millennium means departing from the one-sided unity ecclesiology of the second millennium of the church".¹⁹

e) All the churches are equal. Speaking about the different apostolic churches the council says: "They are consequently of equal dignity so that none of them is superior to the other by reason of rite" (OE 3). According to scholars this equality of churches is guaranteed by the expression 'sister Churches'. "They have family ties as between sisters" (UR 13), and an admirable brotherhood (or sisterhood) (OE 2). In UR 14-18 we see the fundamentals of a theology of sister churches. Any church which has an apostolic origin, proper sacramental structure pointing to a single faith, valid ministry and an authentic eucharist can be called a sister church.²⁰ "All the New Testament communities held the same rule of faith, but with different theologies of churches. The

sacramental source which maintained and fostered the unity of the baptized community was the eucharist".

f) Communion is full and Partial.

An adaptation of the communion language made it possible for the council to distinguish degrees of belonging. Between those churches which have the same faith, sacraments and same hierarchy, the communion is full (for example the communion between the different catholic churches). This is the communion between the 'united churches'. But there is also a certain level of communion, some times a high level communion, between the churches of different faith (for example the communion between the catholic church and the other ecclesial denominations).²¹ To assess this issue one has to enter into the philosophico-theological position of Vat II. Throughout the documents of Vat II we see a substantialist mode of thinking. Its theological position is that the church is a patrimony bequeathed by the apostles to their successors. The integral existence of the church is marked by the authentic preservation of this patrimony in the order of doctrine, sacrament and ministry. Vat II says "the church constituted and organized in the world as a society subsists in the catholic church..." (LG 8). Well known ecclesiologist Ike Tillard, Sullivan, Rosato, Bermejo, Willebrands, Baum etc, commenting on the "Subsists in" maintain that the church of Christ while fully

19. Kasper, Theology and Church, 157.

20. M. Fahey, "Ecclesia Sorores.....", 15-38; E. Lanne, "Eglises unies ou églises soeurs", Irénikon 48 (1975), 322-342; Lanne, "Eglises soeurs: implications ecclésiologique du Tomos Agapis", Istina 25 (1975), 35-47; J. Meyendorff, "Eglises soeurs: Implications ecclésiologique du Tomos Agapis", Istina 25 (1975), 35-47.

21. Cf. G. Baum. "The Ecclesial Reality of the Other Churches", Concilium 1:4 (1965), 34-47; Cardinal Willebrands, "Vatican II's Ecclesiology of Communion", One in Christ 23 (1987), 179-192; Fahey, "Ecclesial Community as Communion", 4-23.

remaining in catholicism truly transcends the limits of catholicism.²² This shows that the Church of Christ should not be exclusively identified with the Catholic Church. The council accepts that there are 'churches' and 'communities' outside the visible boundary of catholicism and they also possess elements of truth.

g) Koinonia transcends the limits of catholicism. To qualify a community as church, it must be apostolic-in faith, sacraments and ministry according to Vat. II. The faith defined in the early ecumenical council's is the foundation upon which the ecclesia has to flourish. This is the theological reason why the council dares to call the separated churches of the east as churches (UR 14-18). What they lack is not the ontological and intrinsic ecclesial character but hierarchical communion with the see of Rome. Hence they are in communion with the catholic church in an imperfect manner. The ecclesial bodies in the West (the separated communities) have not preserved the total reality of the eucharist because of the lack of the sacrament of orders. Some of them lack orthodoxy, full number of the sacraments, valid ministry etc. There are differences in doctrinal matters, in matters of discipline, and also in the sacramental structure. The title "Ecclesial communities" shows the genuine churchly character of the community but without churches'.

There is no full reality of the church where there is no full reality of the eucharist. The belongingness to the church is ontologically eucharistic. By "churches and communities", Vat II means that some of them are churches but not specified which of them are churches and which are ecclesial communites.²³

Vat II has seen the communion of churches in the primary sense as a communion of different churches having the same faith. But the catholic church has a high level communion to other churches and denominations. If we admit the universal church as a communion of different churches, then it is a communion at various levels of fullness of bodies, that are more or less fully churches. The church of Christ is present in various forms, modalities and degrees.²⁴ It is a communion realized at various levels of density and fullness. Ecclesial communion is perfect and imperfect, full and partial. Therefore communion ecclesiology is essentially oriented to an ecumenical ecclesiology and transcends the limits and boundaries of catholicism.

h) Unity, diversity and catholicity should advance together. There is a very profound theological connection between unity, diversity and catholicity. They should go together, and in a theology of communion they should be viewed as complementary realities. Unity is not uniformity. A

22. Tillard, "One Church One God: the Church Broken in Pieces", One in Christ 17 (1981), 2-13; P. Rosato, "Called by God in the Spirit: Pneumatological Insights into Ecumenism", Ecumenical Review 30 (1978), 110-126; Rosato, "Spirit Christology: Ambiguity and Promises", Theological Studies 38 (1977), 423-449; F. Sullivan, "The Significance of Vat II's Decesion to Say of the Church of Christ not that It is but It Subsists in the Roman Catholic Church", Centro Pro Unione 29 (1986), 3-10.
23. A. Dulles, "Church, Churches and the Catholic Church", 213-215; Tillard, "The Church of God is a Communion", 128-129; Baum, "The Ecclesial Reality of the other Church", 39.
24. McDonnell, "Vat II", 412-413.

homogenous ecclesial structure is the most inadequate type because of its insistence on uniformity. In the past we have often considered the unity of the church in terms of uniformity in theology and canon law. But this is a false theological principle. Through the very promulgation of UR and OE Vat II has corrected this mistake. This teaches that true unity diversifies. The catholicity of the eastern churches is not to be assessed and determined by checking how closely they resemble the latin brothers and sisters.²⁵ If one tries to uproot diversities and establish uniformity, then he is not actually living in communion. To be authentically catholic means to be different as the Father, Son and the Spirit are different in the unity of their essence.²⁶ What we need is a catholicism that is pluralistic and open. What is theologically meaningful is an authentic universality which emerges from and integrates diversity,²⁷ not a mere universality which imposes uniformity and suppresses diversity. "A plurality of cultures, religious expressions, theologies and traditions need not undermine the unity of faith. Within the one communion of the catholic church, for example, we have several rites two codes of canon law, celibate and married priests, leavened and unleavened bread, and a wide variety of liturgical rituals."²⁸

Unity and catholicity are essentially connected theological principles. In the east catholicity is another name for unity. In its foundational character catholicity is qualitative, and

only secondarily does it become territorial and quantitative. This new dimension of catholicity is still to be explored and established. The Constantinian epoch of the church and state is over. The absolute supremacy of scholasticism has died out. The predominance of the western culture and colonialism are losing their grounds. 'Right to the strongest' is a political principle, not an ecclesiological one. Christianity is not a thing to be confiscated and monopolized.²⁹ It is something to be received, accepted and lived. Catholicity is not a property to be isolated and one cannot have an exclusive enjoyment of that. The more the churches are united, the more catholic they become. One group of church cannot simply say 'we are fully catholic and you are non-catholic'.³⁰ Catholicity is also not to be seen in the extermination of differences. "In the situation of the dividedness of the church, one would have to ask whether it is reasonable for one church to demand that these churches give up much of themselves before they can enter into full communion with it. This is particularly pertinent in regard to churches whose self-identity was shaped not in the west but in the east during the first millennium". Todays catholicity is incomplete. To a great extent it is the continuation of the western theological and psychological categories. The eastern churches, especially the syriac churches are not seriously taken into consideration. Only a full union of the latin, syriac and greek churches on equal footing would define what catholicity is.

25. J. P. Long, "Eastern and Catholic", *Diakonia* 17 (1982), 94.

26. K. Orèste, "Pluralism in the One Church: Apostolic Churches of the East", *Concilium* 3 (1973), 63.

27 Tillard, "The Church of God is a Communion", 122-123.

28. P. Granfield, *The Limits of the Papacy*, (London : 1987), 122.

29. P. Sherwood, *The Unity of the Churches of God*, (New York : 1963) 4, 42.

30. Details, Congar, *Diversity and Communion* (London : 1984).

"If she (catholic church) is convinced with LG that the church of God subsists in herself, with what is objectively necessary to its fullness, she recognizes also that the church of God exists outside herself though not with every thing that is required for that fullness. To go further, she is aware of the defective state in which certain fundamental ecclesial values are found in herself. Convinced that she possesses what is required for ecclesial fullness, she does not pretend to possess all of it as perfectly as she did. This awareness of deficiency is accepted today in most catholic circles.³¹"

"There is only one unica ecclesia, but it is no longer united within itself. Unica thanks to God's fidelity, it is non unica because of human failing.³²" Thus, in the divided state of christianity, no one group can have an exclusive claim of unity and catholicity.

5. Homeland Return Stopped Halfway

We have seen that in and through Vat II the catholic church has received a renewed awareness of the church as communion of churches. The council really marks an end of a purely Eurocentric and North American axis and attitude in theology. It has clarified at least to a certain extent that christianity is not a mere western product. Hence a transition from monocentrism to polycentrism is also

traceable in its documents. Western particularism and subjectivism were also to a very great extent checked. Scholasticism gave way to different methodologies, styles, theologies and attitudes.³³ No single theology is considered as normative. The proper theological, biblical and liturgical basis of ecclesiology has also been pointed out. The council tried to reintegrate eastern priorities like local eucharistic church, epiclesis, sacramental basis of the church, pneuma-tological orientations, trinitarian emphasis, cosmic optimism etc.³⁴ According to Schillebeeckx the very existence of OE and UR shows that christianity's western form and expression are not exclusive. The same faith could be and should be expressed differently. The church has officially relinquished her western monopoly. The council openly admits that the western church owes much to the east: "It is equally worthy of note that from their very origins the churches of the east have had a treasury from which the church of the west has amply drawn for its liturgy, spiritual tradition, and jurisprudence" (UR 14).

But it is difficult to say that Vat II has freed itself fully from its Roman-Greco poles. Since the majority of the Council Fathers were Latins, it was impossible for the council to dive into the profundity of the

31. Tillard, "An Ecclesiology of the Councils of the Churches", *Mid-stream* 22 (1983), 191.
32. Tillard, "The Church of God is a Communion", 128-129.
33. A. Anton, "Post Conciliar Ecclesiology: Expectations, Results and Prospects for the Future", in R. Latourelle (ed), *Vatican Two: Assessment and Perspectives. Twenty Five Years After (1962-87)*, (New York. 1988), 411-418; J. Komonchak et al (eds), *The New Dictionary of Theology* (New York: 1987), 1034-35; N. Nissiotis, "Towards a New Ecumenical Era", *Ecumenical Review* 37 (1985), 326-335.
34. Congar, "A Last Look at the Council", in A. Stacpoole (ed), *Vatican II* (London: 1986), 343.

eastern theological dimensions.³⁵ As a result there are some significant anomalies and serious confusions with regard to certain theological positions and conclusions of the council. First of all its ecclesiology itself is not very clear. Though it tries to bring forth an ecclesiology of communion, there is also a parallel ecclesiology – juridical ecclesiology – that always moves with the other one. There is no proper synthesis between these two theologies.³⁶ It is clear from the very nervous preoccupation on the papal primacy when it discusses the importance of the local churches and the college of the bishops (LG 18 ff). The confusion of terminologies, the lack of synthesis between theological and juridical language, the discrepancy between dogmatic and pastoral theology etc. are all on account of this above said obsession. Though the council speaks emphatically about the diversities of the oriental apostolic churches, there is a tendency to consider the oriental churches (catholic) as mere uniats (OE 24–28). This explicitly contradicts the theology of sister churches (UR 14–18). Are the eastern catholics mere “united churches” or sister churches? An ecclesiology of communion on equal footing depends on the choice of the theology of sister churches.³⁷

One of the main weaknesses of the ecclesiology of Vatican II is that its return to the sources was partial,

not full. It stopped halfway. Its major defect was that the council still retreated to the two poles – Latin and Greek. What actually happened here is: the latin pole was duly emphasized, the greek pole appeared as a ‘crippled one’ and third and most important – the syriac pole – was totally discarded. Since the going back stopped halfway, the council was not able to answer certain radical ecclesiological problems and it has to accept with all humility that what it has said about the eastern churches has a temporal value only: “This sacred council at the same time declares that... all these directives of law are laid down in view of the present situation, until such time as the catholic church and the separated eastern churches come together into complete unity” (OE 30).

6. Proper Homeland: the Syriac, Greek and Latin world

Had Vat II really meant an ecclesiology of communion in all its proper depth and vigour, it should have said that the universal church of God is an organic communion of the Syriac, Greek and Latin churches.³⁸ In order to bring the theological meaning of Koinonia, this tri-pole ecclesiological thinking is a theological imperative. As H. Kung says we need a theology from the perspectives of christian origins, and the christian centre, and against the horizons of the

- 35. Nissiotis, “The Main Ecclesiological Problem of the Second Vatican Council and the Position of the non-Roman Churches Facing It”, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 2 (1965), 31–62.
- 36. Well known ecclesiologists like Accerbi, Anton, Sullivan, Tillard, Congar, Dulles, Lanne, Kilmartin etc. have pointed out this problem. For details, J. Kallarangatt, “Communion of Churches according to Vat II”, in X. Koodapuzha “Communion of Churches”, 72 ff.
- 37. Lanne, “Eglises unies ou églises soeurs”, 322–342.
- 38. For the Details of Syriac theology Cf. R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (Cambridge : 1975); T. Koonammackal, “An Ecclesiology in the Syriac Tradition”, in X. Koodapuzha, “Communion of Churches”, 129–143.

today's world.³⁹ It is these fundamental issues that we insist in the Syriac pole. In order that ecclesiology be meaningful, it should start from the proper source and centre. There may not be much rational speculation and systematization in syriac theology, but it is mixed with the use of scriptures, symbols and images.

Christianity was actually born in a semitic milieu. It was an Aramaic speaking culture. Among the oriental Churches thos within the syriac tradition may be said to hold the pride of place, since they were representatives of and to a some degree direct heirs to the semitic world out of which christianity sprang.⁴⁰ Edessa is the traditional birth place of syriac christianity. Syriac scholars are of opinion that the syriac churches are the most flourishing sections of the one church of God. "...In the formative period of historic christianity, no other group of churthes can prove a more dynamic and creative record of service to gospel and to human culture."⁴¹ So if one wants to know something about the purest form of christianity one has to think about this semitic form. That is the primordial, unhellanized, uneuropianized christianity. The syriac churches are apostolically born churches. They were born and brought up in the cradle of Christianity. Their identity and ecclesial character is formed and shaped not in the west, not in the Roman way of thinking. They flourished

in the Persian empire, outside the Romans way. The apostolic connection and the persian culture were the formative matrices of this ecclesial tradition. This aspect of christianity has to be taken seriously into consideration when today we speak about the communion of Churches. It is radically different from the latin juridicism and the greek exclusivism. It explicitates the fact that christianity is not a european product.⁴²

The Ecclesiology of communion and going back to the sources being the top level issues now, theologians should acquire a historical and solid awareness of the origins of christianity. Ecclesiology should be consequent to this knowledge. "Earlier in this century, the German scholar W. Bauer stressed the importance of focussing on a wide spectrum, of local and regional churches including the area of Edessa, Alexandria, Antioch, Western Asia Minor as well as Rome for understanding how the churches of the East and of the west developed. Other historians of the early church such as Ekkart Sauser, have tried to reconstruct what church-life must have been like in the East in the christian communities of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, Seleucia, Ctesiphon, and in the west at Lyons, Arles, Carthage, Trier, Barcelona, Ravenna, Milan and Rome".⁴³ The knowledge about this ecclesial development is a must, and a theology of the church should

39. H. Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium* (Glasgow : 1988), 106.

40. S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: Placid Lectures Series* (Moovattupuzha : 1985), 132; G. Pannikkar *An Ecclesiology in the Syriac Tradition* SEERI no. 6, p. 6.

41. R. Murray, "The Characteristics of Eastern Syriac Christianity", in N. C. Garrison. et al (eds), *East of Byzantine: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (Washington: 1982), 14.

42. Details. S. Brock, *Syriac Perspectives in the Late Antiquity* (London: 1984) esp. 1-19.

43. M. Fahey, "The Church", in F. Schüssler Fiorenze and J. P. Galvin (eds), *Systematic Theology*, Vol II (Minneapolis : 1991), 25.

express this ecclesiological development. How the eastern and western churches have received their identity should become the centre of any proper ecclesiology.

After a long research, F. Rilliet and Lavenant say that Edessa was the centre of aramaic christianity.⁴⁴ Edessa was not only the national and cultural capital of syriac christianity, it was also the centre of syriac language and theology. It had maintained a specific syriac cultural identity. "The wars between the Roman and Persian empire cut the Armenian world into two, and effectively isolated Edessa after a.d. 363, from a major sector of syriac christianity. It was on the eastern side of the political demarcation that Seleucia-Ctesiphon, a see whose origins are much more humble than that of Edessa, was to become the patriarchate of the syriac churches within the Sasanian empire".⁴⁵ A. Halleux says that although the syriac churches were never a part of the Roman political matrix, and although separated from the byzantine communion, this church never ceased to consider its own patriarchate as an integral part of the church-universal.⁴⁶ This sense of belonging to the one church of Christ was an integral characteristic of the syriac churches. They always considered themselves as constitutive part of the one church of God. The insistence on the syriac pole is therefore not to be taken as fanaticism, fundamentalism or even as occultism, but it should be seen as the truth. The communion category of Vat II is

the best category to re-capture and re-instate the constitutive role of the syriac churches in a theology of communion of churches. Hence communion is a task and a hermeneutic for us.

7. Syriac Theology should be the leading theology in the Asian Context

When we speak about the importance of the syriac christianity, we have in mind the purest form of Christianity. In our attempt to rediscover the original, I think, we should give the top priority to this original form of christianity.

a) When we speak about the hellenic or latin christianity, we are already speaking of static and essentialist christianity, leaving aside the biblical and historic perspectives. This dynamic thrust of the historical perspective must be allowed to enter again into ecclesiology. This perspective can give birth to an ecclesiology which is prophetic and eschatological. Consultation with the origin and centres of christianity is vital for an authentic communion ecclesiology.

b) The Asian form of christianity and ecclesiology deserve attention of the syriac pole. For all those who are looking for a theology of the church that is not overburdened with the european intellectual and cultural trappings, this syriac pole may be the most useful tool.⁴⁷ Syriac theology must be the source of the ecclesiology of Thomas christians of India, for its strong

44. Details. R. Lavenant, "Edessa" in A. Berardino (ed), *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* Vol I (Cambridge: 1992), 263; F. Rilliet, "Syriac", *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, Vol II, 811.

45. A. Halleux, "Autonomy and Centralization in the Ancient Syriac Churches: Edessa and Seleucia Ctesiphon", *Wort und Wharheit* (Dec. 1978), 63.

46. Halleux, "Autonomy", 60.

47. S. Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 132.

connections with the apostolic patrimony, and liturgy of the syriac churches. The Africans and the South Americans who are criticizing the european culture and theology are now looking back to this persian form of theology.

c) Syriac Churches have shaped their identity outside the Roman empire. It was in this aramaic speaking world that christianity was born. Hence it is not just one of the three poles but is the 'source' pole. The christian ecclesiality has the rootage in the semitic world; afterwards it becomes greek and latin. The syriac ecclesiology must therefore be a great contribution to the universal church of Christ.

d) Amidst the juridical, hierarchical, and philosophical theologies of the church, the meaning of the church has actually suffered a lot. The systematic, theoretical and philosophical mind of the latins and greeks are now turning to the syriac ecclesiology which is but a mixture of asceticism, spirituality, theology and mysticism and try to formulate a prophetic ecclesiology. This mystical and ascetical theology fits in very much in the Indian and Asian context where there are various forms of christianity and other world religions. Syriac theology has always respected the respective cultures of each country.

e) Because of the biblical and spiritual character of the syriac ecclesiology, it could be named as the most collegial segment of the one church of Christ. In the communion ecclesiology of Vat II this collegial section was discarded and it should be revived as early as possible.

f) The syriac pole could stand as the most inspiring force in the

ecclesiology of a Vatican III or a II Jerusalem and also in the theology of the third millennium.

Conclusion

The church as a communion is more than an ecclesial renewal or programme. Church is actually a radical message and promise for the humanity. It is this goal that was in mind when Vat II has envisioned the church as a communion. But it is only a starting point; The goal is yet to be achieved, a task to be materialized. The koinonia of Vat II must be the vehicle in which we travel. The journey is a search in view of the genuine homeland. Here we see that at the beginnings of christianity, the syriac, greek and latin traditions existed side by side. Only a peaceful co-existence of these three traditions can show that the church of God is a communion of churches. Koinonia should be the organizing and perestroika-principle in this case. Then we understand that communion is a category which has various levels of fullness and meaning. It is the hermeneutic of any genuine ecclesiology Vat II has supplied the methodology and principle i. e. the church is a communion of churches. But the real meaning of that depends on each one of us i. e. on how much the syriac, greek and latin pole contribute and receive each other. These three poles should properly establish their own theology, spirituality, canon law, liturgy and administrative system in the unity of faith, sacraments and hierarchy. Otherwise we will be keeping the 'skeleton' or 'caricature' or even an 'elongated shape' of the church of Christ. In short, the communion in order to be authentic must be triangular-syriac, greek and latin-and not bi-polar-greek and latin.

Eastern and Western Christianity in India

Introduction

The Church is on the threshold of entering into the third millennium. The thrust on evangelization is conspicuous. Theological reflections on the nature of evangelization and practical planning on the ways and means of communicating the divine message are going on at various levels and different places. In this context, as students of ecclesiology and history it is our duty to make an assessment of the situation especially in its Oriental and Indian perspectives.

The Vatican II has set a positive scene for a rethinking. It was the result of prayerful reflections and scholarly studies of persons fully committed to the unique mission of the Church. Renewal and reunion were the primary goals of Vatican II. Twenty seven years have elapsed after the Council is over. Many positive changes have taken place in many areas, but many still remain to be realized at various levels. In the theological and pastoral fields the Eastern Christianity in India yet remains hesitant and to a certain extent confused in discovering its identity and mission. It represents the oldest Christianity in India and have to play their role effectively in the Asian context. This article is a modest attempt to analyse some of the aspects of the

missionary scene in view of discovering its identity and mission.

The present Indian scene is a very complex reality. There are churches belonging to the Eastern and Western traditions. Upto the 16th century there was only one tradition, the Eastern tradition of the Church of the Thomas Christians. The Portuguese came in the 16th century and with them also the Latin jurisdiction. It was the beginning of a long period of colonial expansion and the Portuguese did succeed to rule over the ancient church of the Thomas Christians from 1599 for nearly three centuries i. e. upto 1896. It led to an open rebellion in 1653 against the Latin rule. The confused situation paved the way for welcoming a Syrian Jacobite bishop from the Antiochian Church. Thus by the end of the 17th century the Church in India belonged to three families.

The inability to understand the background, nature and mission of these churches cause unnecessary tensions and lack of harmony. Here we try to make a modest attempt to study them in view of their more effective and fruitful missionary role. Some of the latest developments in the church in India and the Papal interventions reveal the greater need to study and make a serious assessment of the Indian situation.

On the 28th of May 1987 His Holiness Pope John Paul II sent an Apostolic Letter¹ to all the Catholic Bishops of India. In this letter the Pope asked them "*to do everything possible to educate and form priests Religious and Faithful to accept and co-operate fully in the implementation*" of the decisions taken by the Holy see in the light of Vatican II on the question of the equality of the rights and obligations of the Oriental Churches for evangelization and pastoral care (OE 3 and 4). After the establishment of the diocese of Kalyan on April 30, 1988, a letter dated January 31, 1991 (No. 270. 661/G. N.) was sent to the Archbishop of Bombay emphasizing the importance to be given to the contents of the above mentioned Papal letter of May 1987.

The National Assembly of the C. R. I. (Conference of the Religious of India) held in January 1993 at Ernakulam took the same matter for its general study and discussion. The Indian Theological Association which is to assemble at Bangalore for its annual conference of 1993 has also chosen this subject for its study.

As this question has become a matter of great importance in the field of evangelization, pastoral care and ecumenism, it is incumbent on us to go into the major aspects of this question. Here we are making a modest attempt to have a birds eye view of the question.

Part I Historical Background

A. The Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches

The St Thomas Christians of India who now number about 7.5 million

are at present a divided community. Till the 16th century they were one community having the same Catholic faith and communion. But during the period of the Latin rule they have been divided into different churches. The Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara Catholic, Orthodox Syrian, Syrian Orthodox, Mar Thoma, Assyrian and Thozhiyoor Churches and some other communities under the Protestant influence belong to the Eastern family of the Thomas Christians. The teaching of the Council paved the way for renewal and reconciliation of the Churches.

It is the ancient and living tradition of the Church in India that St Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Christ came to India in AD 52, established Christian communities in a few places and finally died a martyr at Mylapore near Madras where his tomb is held in great veneration. This tradition is shared by non Christians as well. Certain places are associated with the Apostle's activities. The Patristic testimonies are also in favour of the St. Thomas tradition of India. St Gregory Nazianzen, St Ephrem, St Ambrose, St Jerome, St Gregory of Tours, St Isidore of Seville and others have written about this Indian tradition². It is not the purpose of this paper to make a detailed analysis of the historicity of the apostolate of St. Thomas. The Thomas Christians firmly believe that St. Thomas is the founder of their Church and it is because of him they are called the Christians of St. Thomas. They hold fast to their St. Thomas heritage which they called "Thomāyude Mārgam" (Law of Thomas).

1. For the full text of the Papal letter please, see *Christian Orient*, Vol. 8 (1987) pp. 95-97.
2. For the texts of the testimonies of the Fathers please, see Koodapuzha Xavier, *Bhārathasabhāchritram*, ed. 2, Kottayam, 1990, pp. 69-74.

They developed an ecclesial life style which is briefly defined by the historian P. J. Podipara as "Indian in culture, Christian in religion and Oriental in worship". As the regional grouping developed in the other parts of the Christian world, such as Roman, Antiochian, Alexandrian, Byzantine etc. the Church of the Thomas Christians also formed part of the regional hierarchical alliance with the East Syrian Church, with its head quarters at Seleucia Ctesiphon in Persia. It was a great missionary Church which grew into about 200 dioceses by the 13th century, extending upto Mongolia and China.³

1. Ecclesiastical System

The ecclesiastical system of the Thomas Christians was not of a centralized nature. Local communities had their representative body known as *Palliyogam* which was responsible for the local administration. It was presided over by the clergy of the place on the basis of their seniority. The *Palliyogam* was a decision making and decision taking body and its decisions were decisive at the local level. In matters of wider interest the representatives of the *palliyogams* of that region used to gather and take decisions in common.⁴

Missionaries have given the following report on the nature and functioning of the *palliyogam* among the Thomas Christians "In every parish (chaldeo Malabar) there is an assembly which deals with the ecclesiastical affairs. It consists of the local clergy and laity. They discuss about and

decide on matters such as finance, construction works, maintenance of the church, approval of the candidates to Sacred Orders, absolution from ecclesiastical censures etc.

"The bishop does neither confer Sacred Orders nor absolve from ecclesiastical censures without the official request of the community which submit the formal petition to the bishop after assembling in the church and hearing the request of the candidate to Sacred Orders.

"In matters of major importance people of the neighbouring parishes are assembled. For very important cases all the parishes of the kingdom are invited while at times all the parishes of the whole diocese.

"Such a procedure is very important for the implementation of the decisions. For example, though some people have accepted the dogmatic teachings of the Synod of Diamper, they have not yet accepted its decrees concerning reform on the ground that they were not present for the synod."⁵

We have the following information from Fr. Paulinus a Bartholomeo:

"These Christians constitute a kind of Christian civil republic. When the rights of a particular parish are threatened other parishes come together and defend it. The parish priests and elders judge and settle all cases"⁵

The Archdeacon was the administrative head of the St. Thomas Christians and in matters of common interest to the whole community he enjoyed

3. William G-Young, Handbook of Source Materials for Students of Church History, (CLS Madras, 1977) pp. 22-23. The author gives the list of 18 Metropolitan provinces in their order of precedence.
4. Report of Fr. Boniface OCD in 1750: Archive of S.Congr. Propaganda Fide Congregazioni particolari, Vol. 109, f. 90.
5. Paulino de Bartolomeo, Viaggio all Indie Orientali, Rome, 1796, pp.136-9.

a unique coordinating role. His leadership was acknowledged by the entire community and even by the secular rulers of the country. He was the protector and promotor of the "Thōmāyude Mārgam" (Law of Thomas) and the common cause of the Christian community and was known as "Jāthikku Karthavian", (the head of the community).^{5a}

Fr. Dionysio SJ wrote to the Jesuit General on January 2, 1578 as follows:

"There is in this Christianity, a priest, a native of this country belonging to the Malabar caste, approved for this virtues and habits and learned and experienced in ecclesiastical matters. He knows the S. Scripture and understands and speaks Chaldean. He is esteemed very much by these Christians and before the gentile kings and lords he holds influence and recognition. He is the archdeacon of Angamaly and helps the archbishop, serving him as his provisor."^{5b}

Fr. Joseph Sebastiani OCD, a apostolic commissary gives the following report:

"There is no other indigenous dignity neither secular nor religious, greater than the Archdeacon who is considered to be the prince and head of the St. Thomas Christians."^{5c}

The role of the bishops was very unique among the Thomas Christians and quite in harmony with the indigenous image of a spiritual authority. They were not at all involved in the administration of the Church but led an ascetic life giving an enlightened spiritual inspiration and liturgical leadership. Such a leadership was highly esteemed by the people and they cherished it. The bishops ordained candidates to the Sacred Orders. But these candidates were chosen by the palliyogam, trained according to the 'gurukula' system under the *Malpans*,⁶ recommended by their local palliyogam and presented by the Archdeacon. In short the bishop was exercising the power of Orders in full harmony with the local church under the common leadership of the Archdeacon supported by the Palliyogams. This unique system having its roots in the earliest christian tradition and the Dravidian village assembly called 'Manram'⁷ was very effective in maintaining the unity and solidarity of the St Thomas Christians at the local and common levels. Such an indigenous set up was radically different from the Western system developed in the Roman Empire and followed by the Portuguese.

2. Latin Rule and the consequences

The Portuguese reached India in 1498 and introduced the Latin system. From the time of the erection of the Latin diocese of Goa (1534) and Cochin

- 5a. J. Kollaparampil, The Archdeacon of India, Kottayam, 1972; P. J. Podipara, The Thomas Christians, London, 1970, p. 95.
- 5b. Roman archive of the Society of Jesus, Goa-Mal., Vol. 12, f. 440 v.
- 5c. Archive of the Congregation of Prop. Fide, Rome, Scritti reiferitfi, nel congr. general. Vol. 233, f. 111.
6. Puthiakunnel T., Kēralathile Seminārikal, Ernakulam, pp. 3-7.
7. Koodapuzha X. (ed) Oriental Churches: Theological Dimensions, Vadavathoor, 1988. pp. 73-74.

(1557) there were various attempts to bring the Thomas Christians under the Latin jurisdiction. Imprisonment of their bishops and imposition of latin liturgical and disciplinary practices were the means adopted by the Portuguese. Finally at the death of their bishop Mar Abraham in 1597, the Goan archbishop Dom Menezes convened a synod at Diamper in 1599 and there it was decided that the Thomas Christians should be ruled over by the Latin bishops under the Portuguese royal padroado (patronage).

It was the beginning of almost three centuries of Latin Rule over the Thomas Christians, from 1599 upto 1896. The Latin bishops who did not know the liturgy, discipline, spirituality, theology administrative system and traditions nor even the language of the people, ruled over them for centuries. All the major divisions among the Thomas Christians trace their origin to this period. An open protest⁸ took place on Friday 3rd of January 1653 under their indigenous head Archdeacon Thomas. It took place at Mattancherry against their Latin bishop Francis Garcia who was systematically and consistently suppressing their venerable ecclesial patrimony.

3. Appeal to Rome and Roman intervention

The leaders of the Thomas Christians appealed to Rome and an enquiry was conducted by two commissioners of the Carmelite order (OCD). The result of the enquiry was the Roman decision to send bishops of the Carmelite Congregation

(OCD) under the Congregation of Propaganda Fide. Thus the Thomas Christians were divided into three groups, a major section under the Carmelite bishops sent by Rome, a minority under the Portuguese padroado bishop of Cranganore and a third section under the Archdeacon Thomas, who in 1665 entered into communion with the Antiochian Jacobite Church.

4. Attempts for getting bishops of the liturgical tradition

Though the Thomas Christians were hierarchically divided the people under them wanted to protect and promote their venerable patrimony and restore the unity. Several attempts were made in vain for getting bishops of their own liturgical tradition who would respect their heritage and identity. The delegation under Fr. Joseph Cariattil and Thomas Paremakkal went to the head quarters of Padroado (Lisbon) and Propaganda (Rome) authorities. But it did not bear fruit. Again during the second half of the 19th century efforts were intensified and finally native bishops were given in 1896. In 1930 a section of the Jacobites reunited and they form the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.⁹

5. Oriental Indian bishops under the Western system

Though the Catholic Thomas Christians got indigenous bishops in 1896 the entire ecclesiastical system continued to be Western. Their liturgy which was consistently conformed to the Latin liturgy continued as such.

8. Cfr. J. Thekkedathu, *The Troubled Days of Francis Garcia*, Rome, 1972; J. Kollaparampil, *The St. Thomas Christians Revolution in 1653*, Kottayam, 1981.

9. For the details see, Malancharuvil C., *The Syro-Malankara Church*, Alwaye, 1973.

Their discipline and administrative system were transformed into the Latin patterns of the padroado and Propaganda jurisdictions. Clerical and religious formation followed the same Latin system through the seminaries. In short, the Church of the Catholic Thomas Christians, called the Syro-Malabar Church, became a latinized oriental church. The fields of theology, spirituality, liturgy, discipline, administrative system, devotions etc. had become Latin. Moreover, as a part of the exclusively western form of clerical and religious formation a lack of respect to the eastern patrimony and practices prevailed.

Territorial restrictions

During the Latin rule the Latins and the Orientals were under the same Latin bishops. In 1887 the Portuguese padroado jurisdiction was suppressed and the Thomas Christians came exclusively under the Propaganda Fide jurisdiction. When the Indian Latin hierarchy was established in 1886 India was divided into latin ecclesiastical jurisdictional units. The Catholic Thomas Christians were given jurisdiction only within the restricted area between the two rivers Pampa in the South and Bharathapuzha in the North. Even within this restricted territory parallel Latin dioceses were erected!

From 1953 the territorial restrictions are being gradually lifted. At present there are 21 Syro-Malabar dioceses in India, 12 in Kerala and 9 outside. But the unjust restrictions continue to obstruct the Orientals in the field of evangelization and pastoral care.

The following data reveal the strange situation of the Oriental Churches :

Total area of India	31	25	944	sq km
,, area of Kerala	38	855	,,	,,
Restricted area of the				
Syro-Malabar Church	14	613	,,	,,
Compared to the total				
area of India		0	47%	
				=====

The Missionaries of
India from the
Syro-Malabar Church 67%

B. The Latin Church with its Graeco-Roman Background

Christianity had its origin in Asia. From there it spread into all directions, within the Roman Empire and outside. It reached Persia and India during the apostolic period itself. Edessa, which was outside the Roman Empire was the first Christian city and a centre of Christian learning.

Though Christianity was a persecuted religion within the Roman Empire it did spread there rapidly and became free at the beginning of the 4th century. Gradually it became the official state religion. The Empire was divided into Eastern and Western, and Constantinople and Rome became respectively the capitals. The administrative divisions and systems of the Roman Empire became the official system of the Church as well. Under the imperial protection the Greek cultural heritage combined with the Roman legal system effectively influenced the formulation of the Christian doctrine, the organizational development and the juridical structures.

The Councils were convened by the Roman Emperors and its participation was limited to the Empire. The important centres of the Roman Empire became the regional centres of ecclesiastical administration. The bishop of Rome who was the patriarch of the Latin West, enjoyed a

unique position because of the Apostles Peter and Paul. The administrative divisions of the Roman Empire into dioceses and provinces became the basic structures of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The inalienable and unavoidable role of the Petrine ministry of *exousia* is radically different from every kind of secular authority.

As the civil officials were in charge of their territorial units the ecclesiastical officials also began to be viewed in similar territorial categories. Such an identification of the politico-religious set up led to the attribution of similar titles and privileges to the ecclesiastical officials within the Roman Empire. This transition has arrested the attention of the ecclesiologists and historians.

Yves Congar makes the following observation on the nature of this change:

"The clergy were given important privileges, the bishops became *illustri* (Excellency), and for all practical purposes, ranked with the senators. They were invested with public authority within the framework of the Empire even in the sphere of the secular life of the cities. Further, Church laws often became laws of the Empire which undertook to see that they were respected... Under these conditions we ought perhaps to expect that authority would change its character and that it would acquire a much more secular, a much more juridical meaning, based simply on the relation of superior to subordinate"

1. Formation of the Papal States

The various vicissitudes of history in the West such as the decline of the Western Roman Empire, Lombard wars, weakness of the Byzantine Emperors, rapid spread of Islam, religious disputes, and Frankish intervention and alliance led to the formation of the Papal States and thus the Popes began to play a political and religious role in the West. Such a situation led to the alienation between the churches of the East and West. Needless to mention about those churches which existed outside the Roman Empire, such as the church of India and Persia, which had developed a kind of practical autonomy.

The Roman Church became the most powerful unifying force in the West. The role of the Pope as the supreme leader of the politico-religious reality of the Christendom was a point of contention and dissension causing disquiet among the national kings. The crusades and challenges from outside necessitated an increasingly unifying leadership under the papacy. A highly centralized administrative system began to develop in Rome and various canonical legislations sustained and consolidated such a development.

2. Process of centralization

Historians bring to our attention the various means which were introduced by Rome for achieving an effective centralization. The Inquisition, 'ad limina' visits, different kinds of legates such as *Nati*, *Missi*, and *a Latere*, conferring of pallium, reservation of beatification and canonization, confirmation of relics, etc. are among those which were enforced during this period.¹¹

10. Congar Yves, *Power and Poverty in the Church*, London, 1965, pp. 16-17
11. Neill T.P. & Raymond Schmandt, *History of the Catholic Church*, Milwaukee, 1957, p. 224: The authors give the details of the process of centralization in the Roman Church.

The unhappy events from the time of Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303), such as the Avignon Papacy, (1309-1376) Western Schism, (1378-1417) administrative anarchy and conflicts with the kings were symptoms of weakness at various levels. The theory of 'Two Swords',¹² crusades¹³ reliance on the document called the *Donation of Constantine*,¹⁴ categorical assertion of "Unam Sanctam"¹⁵ of 1302 etc. reveal to us the mentality of the time.

3. Padroado System

It was in such a context the Popes granted special favours to Spain and Portugal¹⁶ empowering them to establish colonies and possess them till the end of time. The sharp contrast between the conquering mentality of the West and of the peaceful co-existence of the East reflected in their mutual relations. The arrival of the Portuguese in 1498 and their subsequent relations with the Christians of St. Thomas provide us ample evidences of this contrast which naturally led

to serious conflicts and divisions which continue even today!

4. Nature of the Conflict

The Portuguese represented a monarchical Church which they wanted to propagate under the protection of their own king. With the support of a powerful naval fleet they found it easy to establish themselves in India both politically and ecclesiastically. The mass baptisms at the Fishery coast, Goa and other places provide proofs of this policy. This new Christian community depended on the Portuguese politically, economically and even socially.

The Thomas Christians of India followed an ecclesiastical system which was developed in a milieu entirely different from any kind of imperial, monarchical influence. They co-existed with people of other religious traditions. Hindu temples, Muslim mosques

12. St. Bernard explains the medieval concept of the spiritual and material power of the Church centred on the Pope. Cfr Neill T. P. & R. Schmandt, op. cit. pp. 206-207.
13. For the evidences of politico-religious leadership given by the Popes during the time of the crusades Cfr. Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History, published by the Department of History of the University of Pennsylvania, Vol. I, No. 2, pp. 6-7.
14. Neill & Schmandt make the following observation on the document *Donation of Constantine*:
"This charter proved to be a forgery at the time of the Renaissance, but generally considered genuine until that time, purported to be a deed by Constantine the Great granting to Pope Sylvester I (314-35) temporal sovereignty over the entire Western Empire and primacy within the Church. The forged onation was drawn up by its anonymous author to lend an air of greater legality to the de facto sovereignty..." (op. cit. p. 145).
15. The Papal bull *Unam Sanctam* of 18th November 1302 reveals the medieval mind: "Wherefore we declare, state, define and pronounce that it is altogether necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff". For the full text of the Papal bull see Denzinger H., *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 24-25th ed. Barcelona, 1948, pp. 218-220.
16. Papal bull *Inter Cetera* of May 4, 1493 and Treaty of Tordesillas of June 1494.

and Christian churches existed in the vicinity¹⁷ and the people used to co-operate with each other with respect. The religious loyalty to one's own faith tradition did not give way to any kind of conflict with or intolerance to others.

The initial relations between the Portuguese and the Thomas Christians were very cordial. The latter being the chief exporters of pepper and other spices, their co-operation was immensely helpful for the Portuguese to achieve their commercial goal. But as they became established politically and ecclesiastically a change of policy took place. The padroado dioceses of Goa was established in 1534 and Cochin in 1557 and the former became an archdiocese. With this they wanted to bring the Thomas Christians also under their jurisdiction. Here begins the series of conflicts, tensions and divisions. The Portuguese power and ecclesiastical influence could keep up their hierarchical control over the Thomas Christians for three centuries. Such a rule led to disastrous divisions and conflicts!

Part II : Teachings of Vatican II and their Implementation

Introduction

The Vatican II stands out in the history of the general Councils for its unique goal, renewal and reunion. The Council does not canonize the past. On the contrary it tried to return to the authentic sources. The prophetic words of Pope John XXIII "to shake off the dust of the Empire

that has gathered on the throne of St. Peter from the time of Constantine"¹⁸ provided a corrective and directive principle in the process of rediscovery. By following it the Council has rediscovered the true nature of the Catholic Church as the communion of churches. This rediscovery was the result of the dynamic process of returning to the genuine sources of the Church.

1. Correction of the unjust situation in India

It should be a matter of our special attention that the Vatican II has taken into special attention the unjust situation that prevailed in India from the time of Western colonialism, and corrected it in number 3 of the decree on the Oriental Churches by clearly asserting the principle of the equality of the rights and obligations of the Churches. The commentators of the documents of Vatican II, have not failed to bring it to the attention of the world:

Herbert Vorgrimler:

"The real reason to why the right to preach the gospel, that is the right to engage in missionary activity, is specially mentioned among the rights and obligations of all the individual Churches is to be traced to the *situation in India*, where the Malabar Church, which has a large surplus of priests, was until recently only permitted to convert people to the Latin rite".¹⁹

Victor J. Pospishil:

"However the situation is different for the flourishing Catholics

17. The examples of such religious cooperation exist even today in some places in Kerala,
18. Cfr. Cited by Congar Yves, Power and Poverty in the Church, London, 1965, p. 127.
19. Herbert Vorgrimler, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Vol. I, London, 1967, p. 315.

of the two Syrian rites in South India ... were not permitted to extend their missionary activity to their pagan Indian brothers because the territory had been assigned to Latin rite missions, which rite after all reached back that part of the globe hardly a few hundred years. This was considered not only unjust but also shortsighted because the Malabaritan Church is going through a period of awakening of priestly and religious vocations of unheard proportions. In addition, being denizens of India so much longer than the Latin rite Church, the Syrian rites are not considered contaminated by the European background of so many Latin rite missions”

Walter M. Abbot: ²⁰

“By stressing the equal dignity of the different Catholic rites, the Council condemns clearly the theory of those who, mostly in the 18th century, taught that the Roman rite enjoyed some kind of precedence over the others ... In the past, the apostolate in the missions has been conducted exclusively in the Latin rite. This practice has been resented by some Easterners, mostly in India where the priests of the ancient Malabar rite were always obliged to adopt the Roman rite to undertake missionary apostolate”.²¹

Some of the statements of Vatican II on the nature of the Catholic Church as a communion of Churches:

The decree on the Eastern

Churches of Vatican II we have the following statement:

Communion of Churches:

“The Church, Holy and Catholic ... combining into various groups held together by a hierarchy, form *separate Churches or rites*.” (OE 2).

It is followed by other statements on the equality of the rights and obligations of the Churches for evangelization, pastoral care and self government.

Evangelization:

“(Individual Churches or Rites) are consequently of equal dignity, so that none of them is superior to the others by reason of *rite*. They enjoy the same rights and are under the same obligations, even with respect to preaching the gospel to the whole world under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff.” (OE. 3)

Pastoral Care:

“Therefore, attention should everywhere be given to the preservation and growth of each individual church. For this purpose, parishes and special hierarchy should be established for each where the spiritual good of the faithful so demands” (OE 4).

Self government:

“For this reason, it solemnly declares that the Churches of the East, as much as those of the West, fully enjoy the right and are in duty bound, to rule themselves” (OE 5).

The Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* specifies the distinctive elements proper to each Church.

20. Victor Pospishil, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum- The Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches of Vatican II*, New York, pp. 13-14.
 21. Walter M. Abbott ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, London, 1966, p. 375, footnote No. 7

Distinctiveness:

"By divine providence it has come about that various Churches established in diverse places by the apostles and their successors have in course of time coalesced into several groups, organically united, which, preserving the unity of faith and the unique divine constitution of the universal Church, enjoy their own discipline, their own liturgical usage, and their own theological and spiritual heritage" (LG 23).

In these and other conciliar documents the Catholic Church is presented as the communion of individual churches. These Churches are rooted in the earliest apostolic traditions, which are preserved and fostered by the Fathers (OE 1). Hence their heritage belong to the full Catholic and apostolic heritage of the Church (UR 17) and "it is the mind of the Catholic Church that each individual Church or rite retain its traditions whole and entire, while adjusting its way of life to the various needs of time and place" (OE 2). As the legitimate heirs of the divine tradition of the Church these churches have a unique and inalienable role to play in the life of the universal Church.

2. Implementation of the teaching of Vatican II and the resistance

The Vatican II asserted the principle of the equality of the churches and their rights for evangelization and pastoral care. The awareness of the principle of equality of the churches and their rights and obligations

created an atmosphere where the need to correct an unjust situation existing in India became urgent. The statistical studies made in connection with the 'Church in India Seminar' which we have already cited above give us the necessary data of the pre-vatican II period.

The document *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* was officially approved by the Council on November 21, 1964 and came into force after two months. It asserted the equality of the rights and obligations of the Oriental Churches for evangelization (OE 3) pastoral care (OE 4) and self government (OE 5). Among the Oriental Churches of Asia the Syro-Malabar Church occupies a unique position in its missionary potentiality. But the attempts to implement these teachings of the Council was met with staunch resistance from the part of those who wanted to continue the unjust restrictions imposed on the Oriental Churches during the period of the Latin rule and western colonialism,

The whole of India had already been divided into Latin dioceses and provinces. Even within the restricted area of the Oriental Churches parallel Latin dioceses were erected.

A western jurisdictional system which was designed for the All-India jurisdiction was disturbed by the Council document granting equality of the rights and obligations. It is worthy of observing in this context that the establishment of the parallel Latin dioceses within the Oriental dioceses were not objected by the Orientals.²²

22. The text of the speeches made at the CBCI session held at Trichinopoly from 9-16 January 1982 are published in *Christian Orient*, 1982 No. 1 pp. 5-70 followed by a theological evaluation of the relevant points by Koodapuzha X. & Vellanickal M. ibidem pp. 60-70.

3. Appointment of the Apostolic Visitator

Finally an Apostolic Visitator was appointed by Rome on 8th September 1978. Archbishop Mar Antony was the Apostolic Visitator and the author of this article, the official secretary. I had to do the pioneering work for collecting the data and scrutinizing them. Most of the centres outside Kerala were visited by the Apostolic Visitator and myself and we had on the spot study of the situation. We are grateful to all those who cooperated with us and provided us with the necessary data. The report of the Apostolic Visitator was submitted to the Pope John Paul II on 5th of January 1980.

Opposition

Objections were raised and it was suggested that Bishops belonging to the three Churches present papers at the next CBCI Conference pointing out their points of view. Mar Joseph Powathil, Mar Cyril Malancharuvil and Archbishop Henry D'Souza represented the Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara and Latin Churches respectively. The papers were presented and discussed during the CBCI Conference held at Trichinopoly in January 1982. This discussion at the CBCI level did not lead to any conclusion except the decision to continue the same.²³

It was decided to have a theological discussion on the issues involved. Thus a representative body of the bishops and theologians of the three Churches met at the Goregaon Seminary from 23rd to 26th August 1983. The representatives were the following Syro Malabar Church: Mar Joseph Powathil, Mar Kuriakose Kunnacherry,

Mar Sebastian Mankuzhikary, Frs. Matthew Vellanickal and Xavier Koodauzha.

Syro-Malankara Church: Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios, Mar Cyril Malancharuvil and Fr. Berchmans OIC

Latin Church: Archbishop Henry D' Souza, Bishop Patrick D' Souza: Archbishop Angelo Fernandes, Bishop Thumma and Frs. James Dupuis SJ Albert Fernando SJ and Felix Wilfred.

The theological discussions were centred on the ecclesiological issues and the implications of the Council documents. It was agreed that the equality of the rights and obligations of the Churches are to be accepted by all. But from the part of the Latin bishops it was objected saying that the Indian reality is different and that the coexistence of the Eastern and Western Churches in the same place would lead to confusion and division. But the Orientals pointed out that the Indian reality is very much congenial to the diversity of races cultures, religious traditions, customs etc.

November 1982: Meanwhile a Memorandum of 115 pages with the title "*Latin-Oriental Relation and the Mission of the Church in India*", signed by all the Latin Bishops of India, was submitted to Pope John Paul II requesting him not to implement the practical suggestions of the report of the Apostolic Visitator.

September 8,1983: Response to the Report of the Apostolic Visitator²⁴ (44 pages)

23. The so called "*Response to the Report of the Apostolic Visitator*" was submitted and published in the name of the CBCI. It was without approval of the CBCI.
24. Cyril Mar Baselios, The Holy Catholic Church as the Communion of Churches, Ernakulam, 1993, p. 3.

On the 8th of September 1983 a memorandum was submitted to John Paul II signed by all the Latin Archbishops of India and four Chairmen of the CBCI Commissions. It is to be noted that this document was submitted to Holy Father by the Latin hierarchy on behalf of the CBCI. The 'Response' objected to the implementation of OE 4.

Jan. 25,1984: Reply of three Syro-Malabar bishops to the "Response" of the Latin Hierarchy (17 pages)

April 25,1985: Memorandum of all the Latin Archbishops and 4 bishops of the Latin Church submitted to Pope John Paul II

October 1985: Speeches made by the Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara and Latin hierarchies of India at the Bishops Synod in Rome regarding the delay in implementing the Council documents in India.²⁵

February 1,1986: Assurance given by the Pope at Delhi regarding the proper implementation of OE 3 and 4 in India.

May 28,1987: Letter of Pope John Paul II to all the bishops of India asking them to educate the clergy, religious and laity to accept the

Council documents and directives of the Holy See. (CO.1987, No.2, pp. 95-98).

April 30,1988: The diocese of Kalyan was erected for the Syro-Malabar immigrants residing in the Latin dioceses of Bombay, Poona and Nasik.

Jan 31,1991: (No. 270.661/G. N) Letter of His Grace Angelo Cardinal Sodano, Secretary of State of Vatican, to His Eminence Cardinal Simon Ignatius Pimenta, Archbishop of Bombay, reminding the Holy Father's previous "appeal to all the bishops of India to do everything possible to *educate and form* your priests, religious and faithful to accept and cooperate in its (the letter's) implementation".

Part II: Theological and Practical Reflections

1. Churches are not mere Rites

In English Dictionaries the meaning given to the word *rite* is the following: form of procedure, solemn ceremony, the manner in which a ceremony or observance is carried out, ceremonial observances customary

25. Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios, the Malanakara Catholic Metropolitan Catholic Metropolian of Trivandrum, referring to the speech of the Latin representative Archbishop Henry DSouza made the following observations at the Bishop's Synod in Rome in October 1985:

"Archbishop Henry said" One City One Bishop". I am archbishop in Trivandrum. Five years after our See was established a new Latin Bishop was appointed in the same city. No question was asked, no objection was made'

The archbishop said: 'One territory, one jurisdiction' He quoted ancient Councils. Surely it was after these Councils that Latin jurisdiction was introduced into India! Now Latin jurisdiction has been extended all over the world. May I ask: "If all are equal, how can some be more equal?". The full text of the speech of Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios is published in Christian Orient, 1986, (pp. 43-35).

words gestures etc. All these refer to the externals only. In this sense the word *ritualism* means the attitude to pay too much attention to the externals with the result that true religious faith and values are neglected.

The emphasis given to the externals at the cost of the true spiritual and human values is alien to Christianity. The Church is the Body of Christ and the Spirit of God indwells in it. The external reality of the Church is only the sign of its divine, invisible and internal reality. Hence the application of the term rite to a church is a distortion of its true nature and would mean like a shell devoid of its kernel!. The rituals are meaningful in the Church only when they are signs of the spiritual reality. An individual church within the Catholic Communion has got its liturgy, spirituality, discipline theology, traditions etc. But the term rite does not convey these essential aspects of a church. The distinctive ecclesial identity of a church goes much deeper than the external ritual differences.

Rite: its western connotation

The term 'rite' is never used by the Eastern Churches to signify a Church. For the Easterners the Church of God consists of Churches with their own individuality which includes liturgy, spirituality, discipline, theology, traditions etc. The Catholic Church is the communion of these churches. The starting point for the Easterners is the reality of the different churches living in communion while in the West it seems to start from the

universal Church and proceed to the local, individual or particular Churches. Here the oneness of the Church precedes the diversity of the reality in which it exists. The Easterners view the Churches as the legitimate heirs of the apostolic heritage united in the communion of faith celebrating the sacred mysteries within the divine constitution of the Church of God. In this perspective the different churches with their own unique ecclesial identity and heritage are not mere rites but sacred signs of the divine plan of salvation for the whole humanity.

In the Western world the Roman Catholic pattern emerged from the beginning and it became the uniform standard. Any kind of local differences were considered as something merely external which was expressed by the term rite.

In was in this sense the Roman Church began to consider the Eastern Catholic Churches in communion with Rome. There were attempts to conform them to the Roman pattern, as rites! Their mere ritual existence without the authentic ecclesial identity and venerable patrimony projected a distorted image of the Eastern Individual Churches!

The following observation of Cyril Mar Baselios is relevant:

"The Oriental Churches deprived of their ecclesial identity and role as churches of their own right, were reduced to the level of rare patrimonial specimens to be preserved and protected under the patronage of the Latin Church"²⁶

26. Archbishop Mar Antony Padiyara of Ernakulam and Mar Joseph Powathil of Changancherry jointly submitted a paper to the Fathers of the Bishops Synod under the title:

"The Pastoral and Missionary Problems of the Oriental Churches in India". See the text in Christian Orient, 1986, pp. 26-31.

2. The Individual Churches legitimate heirs and living witnesses of the authentic traditions

The ecclesial heritage enshrined in these churches has to be esteemed, preserved and fostered. These traditions belong to the whole Church. The apostolic proclamation of the gospel of Christ was understood, appreciated, interpreted and lived in different places by the people belonging to the different socio-cultural and religious background. Hence diversity became evident from the very beginning. This variety in no way stands against the basic unity of faith. They reveal the multi-dimensional aspects of the same truth revealed by God. Hence the churches which faithfully maintain these traditions play a unique role in preserving the divine heritage of the whole Church.

Consequently the mind of the Catholic Church is unhesitatingly expressed as follows: "For it is the mind of the Catholic Church that each individual church or rite retain its traditions whole and entire while

adjusting its way of life to the various needs of time and place" (OE2). The fulness of Christian tradition is achieved only when the different traditions of the apostolic churches are brought into full communion. The diversity of the traditions manifests the richness of the Christian heritage. Hence the churches have the obligation to remain faithful to their authentic traditions. If they give them up the Catholic Church becomes impoverished. The ecclesial traditions cannot be preserved if they are not properly understood, appreciated and faithfully lived. A living community alone can give an adequate expression to an authentic form catholicity. Hence the Vatican II wants the members of the different churches to remain faithful to their own traditions and follow them with the greatest fidelity:

"All members of the Eastern churches should know and be firmly convinced that they can and should always preserve their own legitimate liturgical rites and established way of life.. They themselves should honour all these

In the speech of Archbishop Antony Padiyara he stated:

"We find it our duty to bring it to the attention of the Holy See the strange situation which our Oriental Catholic Churches are facing today in India, because of the unjust territorial restrictions imposed on them from the time of Western colonialism. Despite the explicit statement of Vatican II even now they are unable to extend their pastoral care to the sons and daughters of their churches... We know that justice delayed is equal to justice denied. This is the tragic situation which exists in India". (CO 1986, pp. 35-36)

Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil pointed out ecclesiological and ecumenical problems risen from the denial of the equality of the churches in India. He said:"

"One of the major obstacles for ecumenism is the attitude of some of the Latin hierarchs towards the Orientals in the Catholic communion. A few of their recent assertions are disturbing to the separated brethren. They call India for instance, a Latin territory! They stand for uniformity for jurisdiction and hinder the Orientals from fulfilling their pastoral and missionary obligations. For a genuine ecumenism much remains to be done" For the full text of the speech see Christian Orient, 1986, pp. 37-40.

things with the greatest fidelity. Besides, they should acquire an ever greater knowledge and a more exact use of them. If they have improperly fallen away from them because of the circumstances of time or personage, let them take pains to return to their ancestral ways" (OE 6).

3. The Fundamental rights of a Church: Evangelization and Pastoral care

Evangelization and pastoral care are the most fundamental rights of the Church. The Church is essentially missionary and it is its primary concern and obligation to provide the necessary pastoral assistance to the people of God. Evangelization and pastoral care are the two essential dimensions of the same mission of the Church.

As the Catholic Church is the communion of the churches the basic rights and obligation of the Church are equally applicable to and shared by all the churches within the same communion. This principle is explicated by Vatican II:

"They (Churches) are consequently of equal dignity, so that none of them is superior to the others by reason of rite. They enjoy the same rights and are under the same obligations, even with respect to preaching the gospel to the whole world (Cf. Mk 16:15) under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff" (OE 3).

It is through the exercise of these basic rights and obligations the churches fulfill their unique mission and grow in their individuality. Through the process of evangelization, the churches grow in their spiritual and respond to the divine command "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them observe

all that I have commanded you; and o, I am with you always to the close of the age" (Mt. 28:19-20).

The churches within the catholic communion build up their catholicity and unity by fulfilling their basic obligation and exercising the rights. These rights and obligations are unavoidable and inalienable. The catholicity and communion demand that every church should not only be conscious of its own rights and obligations but also do everything to make it possible for the other churches to fulfil their rights and obligation. The violation of the basic rights of the churches is a sin against unity and catholicity of the Church of Christ.

4. Territoriality in the Church

As we have already observed in our historical survey the strict territorial jurisdictional set up of the Church is a particular development when it became the official state religion of the Roman Empire. The Catholic Church and its communion are not the product of a territorial administrative system. The Church is the communion of the People of God who are not territorially divided. The secular political systems are built up on the subordination and coordination of the various administrative units based on the territorial divisions. It is not at all proper to give and exclusively secular image to the Church absolutizing it all over the world.

The individuality and patrimony of the churches cannot be territorially confined. If the territorial principle is universally applied the first occupant of a vast territory becomes its monopolizer. This secular and political principle is sociologically and historically questionable in a fast growing

and changing world where the people are not strictly territorially restricted To impose territorial restrictions to the spiritual and ecclesial traditions is an unfair application of a secular system to the Church of God.

On the other hand the so called 'one territory, one jurisdiction' is not yet historically sustained as a universal principle. If so, the Padroado and Propaganda jurisdictions of the Latin rite would not have been introduced into India where the Church of the Thomas Christians existed from the very early centuries. On the other hand the Orientals were territorially confined to less than half a percent of the total Indian territory and almost parallel latin jurisdictions were set up within the Oriental dioceses.

5. Fidelity and openness

Openness to the other ecclesial traditions is a genuine sign of catholicity. The fidelity to one's own tradition does not mean the denial of or adverse attitude to the valid traditions of the other churches. It is through mutual esteem and openness the Church becomes really catholic.

At the same time the openness to other churches and their traditions does not mean a blind acceptance of their practices. A Church becomes genuine and catholic in proportion to its fidelity to its own authentic sources. If the churches do not remain faithful to their own ecclesial heritage they will be diluting their own identity. A diluted identity loses its distinctiveness. Those churches which fall prey to the blind imitation of other churches become a kind of hybrid without an identity of their own. Such churches have very little to contribute to the fulness of Christian heritage.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The Church in India represents the Eastern and Western traditions. The Eastern tradition starts from the earliest period and the Western from the 16th century.
2. In the evolutionary process of the early churches we can observe a trimensional influence of the Latin West, West, Greek East and the Christian Orient outside the Graeco-Roman world. The Latin West and Greek East developed within the Roman Empire.
3. From the fourth century the Church became the official State religion within the Roman Empire. In this new politico-religious situation the legal and organizational structures of the Latin West and the philosophical and cultural insights of the Greek East jointly contributed to the building up of the Church in the Roman Empire in its official set-up.
4. The effects of this Graeco-Roman alliance remains distinct in the structural, doctrinal legal and administrative areas of the Church of the first millennium. The second millennium parts with this alliance at the hierarchical level and other levels which resulted in the mutual alienation. The various religious controversies deepened the gap.
5. It is in this background the Roman Church developed its centralized administrative system after the monarchical pattern. The unique position of the Pope as the king of the Papal States and the head of the Christendom brought with it greater religious and political involvement which was decisive in the later Medieval ages.

6. The Portuguese who arrived in India in the 16th century projected the image of a monarchical Church under the patronage of their king.
7. The Church of the Thomas Christians had its development in an entirely different Asian milieu. Their ecclesiastical system in several areas represented the earliest Christian tradition with great emphasis on the local church. The palliyogam after the pattern of the Dravidian village assembly called Manram, the coordinating role of the Archdeacon and the spiritual and ascetic role of the bishops as the liturgical head are characteristics of the St. Thomas Christian tradition.
8. The attempts to conform the Church of the Thomas Christians to the Church of the Latin West met with strong opposition. The imposition of Latin rule from 1599 upto 1896 led to continuous tensions, revolts and divisions. The public protest of 1653 known as the Koonan Cross Oath and the subsequent hierachical alliance of a section with the Antiochian Church paved the way for further divisions!
9. The unjust territorial restrictions reduced to less than half a percent of the Indian territory, imposition of the Western disciplinary and administrative systems, latinization of their liturgical and spiritual traditions, erection of almost parallel Latin jurisdictions even within the restricted territory of the Orientals are the results of the Latin rule and the causes of tensions.
10. The overemphasis on the principle of territorial jurisdiction (one territory, one jurisdiction) which was not followed in introducing the Latin jurisdiction within the Oriental dioceses smacks inconsistency and projects the image of a bishop of the Roman Empire exercising his jurisdiction from his office in a city.
11. The Indian and Asian image of a bishop is not that of a ruler of a territory but of a spiritual and ascetic *guru* who knows the S. scripture, teaching of the Fathers and presides over the liturgical celebrations and prayer gatherings and above all capable of inspiring the people of God with his spiritual insights and spirit of detachments from money and honours. The emphasis on territory and administrative centralization are borrowed from the secular systems developed elsewhere.
12. The Church exists for *exousia* and self effacing service. The spread of the Kingdom of God is not to be understood in terms of territory but of hearts of humanity divinely called to become the People of God. The spirit of service, co-operation, collaboration and above all mutual love and primary concern for God's reign alone can achieve the goal of the Church. It is a unity in diversity in which eternal harmony of the three persons of the Divine Trinity should always reign supreme.

The Church in the Churches: A Syriac Ecclesiological Perspective

Introduction

Every unnatural adjective added to the Church is an impoverishing element in ecclesiology. The ideal is the Church, one, holy, catholic, orthodox, apostolic, etc. These are natural adjectives which explain the very nature of the Church. Unnatural qualifications are external to the nature of the Church and they are to be understood apart from the natural ones. The natural ones are defining the very identity of the Church rather than qualifying the Church from outside, and they are therefore included in the creeds. Geographic, linguistic, national and personal attributes and elements like Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara, Syrian Orthodox, Ukrainian, Latin/Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Indian, Anglican, Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox and the countless other such terms are not defining the ecclesiology from inside. These qualifications mean something added to the Church from outside. They are unable to explain by themselves what the Church is in reality; they explain one or another characteristic of the shadows we call the churches. How far the reality is represented by these shadows is the problem.

The Church is more extensive and inclusive than the churches which are rather restrictive and exclusive. The churches have a tendency to remain as they are, to reject what they are not, to see the fellow-churches or sister churches with an amount of suspicion after identifying themselves with the Church. These features shut the door of communion and ecumenism because of a holier than thou attitude towards the sister-churches. All the same they point towards the existential tension between being and becoming, status quo and progress, diversity and unity, present and eschaton, individuality and communion. How to achieve the latter without losing the former is the crux of ecclesiology itself today.

The Church to be and the churches

Being is always in tension with becoming. Our churches are already what they are; they are well-defined, distinct, individualistic. So they try to see other churches as inferior, uncatholic, unorthodox,¹ not up to the mark, etc. This holier than thou attitude in ecclesiology is detrimental to becoming. So we have a dead end in ecumenism. Each church is trying to devour the smaller or weaker partner thinking that such a process

1. J. Meyendorff, *Living Tradition. Orthodox Witness in the Contemporary World* (New York 1978), p. 90.

will rectify the wrong side. In theological and practical terms this devouring and domination take place.² So if they side with us, they are alright! If they stand with others they are wrong! This kind of self-righteous strategem of Latin West and Greek West have polarized the field of ecclesiology and ecumenism, giving birth to uniatism, deviationism and ecclesiastical exclusivism.³ But the tripartite tree of the Church bringing in the third force is indeed an alternative to the two-piece understanding of Christianity.⁴

Every church wants to define what the one, holy, apostolic, catholic, orthodox Church is, what it should be, etc; but none of them is ready to look inside its own edifice and demolish itself – if and when necessary – renew itself, restore itself. They are on the move tossed to and fro, but themselves remaining static. They move to drag others to themselves. They struggle to point out the drawbacks of their fellow-churches, to rekindle old theological conflicts with fresh enthusiasm. As a result the shadows we call churches do not move further to reach the reality of the Church.

Since we are trying to understand ecclesiology from the oriental side, Congar's analysis might help us to explain the fossilized attitudes of some churches. "From the perspective of an ecclesiology which is not only theoretical but is also put into practice, we are confronted by two logics. The East remained oriented on the logic of local or particular churches in communion with one another in the

unity of faith, love and eucharist; this unity was realized by means of exchanges and communications and then, when the need made itself felt, by the holding of a council. It was a unity of communion. The West, which Islam had cut off from the North Africa, accepted the authority of the Roman see, and over the course of history Rome occupied an increasingly prominent place."⁵

For many, what we have already in hand is the Church – indeed a very mistaken notion. What the Church is easy to determine because we have the defining adjectives like one, holy, catholic, apostolic, orthodox, true, etc. Are all these elements visible to the same extent in all our so-called churches? This question has to be asked by the churches themselves. They should look inside and clean the inside, instead of going out to correct other churches; to devour fellow-churches is no solution.

The Church is One

In fact the Church to be is not the same as the churches we have here and now. But both are to be one and the same because the Church of Christ has no plural in the ultimate analysis. "The Church is properly so called just because she calls together all human beings and unites them together into one single whole."⁶ According to St Paul the local church is the "whole Church."⁷ So it is clear that the local churches are the same as the Church. What if we have more than one local church? There is an inner relation and correspondence

2. See G. Chediath, T. Vellilamthadam, *Ecumenism in Danger* (Manganam 1986).

3. See my "An Ecclesiology in the Syriac Tradition", *Communion of Churches*, ed. X. Koodapuzha (Vadavathoor 1993), p. 130.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

5. Y. Congar, *Diversity and Communion* (London 1984), p. 27.

6. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* 18:24.

7. Rom 16:23.

between them. The Church finds its self-expression in and through the churches. Church is the one and the same everywhere and at all times since it is the body of one and the undivided Christ. Cyril of Alexandria writes: "By means of one body he blesses those who believe in him and incorporates them in himself and in each other; and that body is his own. And who can divide and remove them from this mutual union of nature, when they have been bound together in unity with Christ by means of that one holy body?"⁸

A division in the body of Christ is unimaginable for Paul: "I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united

in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarrelling among you, my brethren... Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"⁹ In the Syriac sources "the origins of the Church are traced to the baptism of Christ and his death on the cross".¹⁰ Baptism is in the name of Christ; it is into the body of Christ. "The Syriac mind views the Church itself in sacramental terms. The Church is not only the source of the mysteries, but is a sacrament of the union of Christ with his people".¹¹ There is an incorporation that happens in baptism and eucharist. If so, how can there be more than one Church, one bride, one body of Christ, one liturgical assembly of God? Ephrem speaks of this baptismal and eucharistic unity of the Church:¹²

Our Lord washed the bodies of the brethren
in a basin that was the symbol of unity.

By that symbol also was cut off the member
who cut himself off and betrayed himself.

From the womb of the waters we are newly mounted up;
let us not be divided members
which contend against each other, not perceiving
that it is with their Beloved they are quarrelling.

The liturgical assembly is identical with Christ's body. This body is constituted by baptism and eucharist. Here ecclesiology becomes Christocentric and sacramental. Church is the sacrament of all that Christ is and

all that He did for our salvation. That is why Ignatius of Antioch says: "Where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church".¹³ What Ignatius wrote becomes significant when we notice that this is the first time the

8. H. Bettenson, *The Later Christian Fathers. A Selection from the writings of the Fathers from St. Cyril of Jerusalem to St. Leo the Great* (Oxford rept 1983), pp. 266-267.
9. 1 Cor 1:10-13.
10. S. J. Beggiani, *Early Syriac Theology with special reference to the Maronite Tradition* (Lanham 1983), p. 81.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
12. HdC 3:8 = R. Murray, "St Ephrem the Syrian on Church Unity", *ECQ* 15 (1963), p. 171.
13. *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 8.

technical phrase 'Catholic Church' appears in the theological vocabulary.

Church is unique and one in God's plan and salvation history attests this. People of God is the Bride of God in OT. It is the People assembled by God to worship Him.¹⁴ Rejection of the Nation is the election of the Nations,¹⁵ the New and Crowned Bride of Christ.¹⁶ "...Church is betrothed by Christ at his baptism in the Jordan and is wedded to Christ on the cross. The blood and water from the side of Christ represent the mysteries of 'Incarnation' by which members of the Church are incorporated and nourished".¹⁷ According to Ephrem, since the Church is the Bride of Christ¹⁸ she is imprinted with the

image (*dmūtā*) of the heavenly Bridegroom.¹⁹ Through the replacement of 'amma with 'amma d-men 'ammē particular became universal.²⁰ Womb of Jordan became the mother of all Christians and hence baptism is described as the foundation of the Church.²¹ "For Ephrem the Church is first a local Christian community such as the Church of Nisibis or of Edessa. In addition, the Church is the great Christian community instituted by Christ in place of the synagogue. It is the refound Paradise, the Body of Christ, and his holy and immaculate spouse".²² Church is the New Eve, born from the pierced side of Christ, the New Adam.²³ The Christological and soteriological dimensions of Syriac ecclesiology are clear in Ephrem's words:²⁴

14. L. Bouyer, *Life and Liturgy* (London 1956), pp. 23-34; G. Martimort et al., *The Church at Prayer. An Introduction to the Liturgy. Vol. 1. Principles of the Liturgy* (London 1987), pp. 89-98.
15. HiA 49:17; R. A. Darling, "The Church from the Nations in the Exegesis of Ephrem", *IV Symposium Syriacum 1984 Literary Genres in Syriac Literature* (OCA 229, Rome 1987), pp. 111-121.
16. For this very frequent theme in Syriac ecclesiology, see H. Engberding, "Die Kirche als Braut in der ostsyrischen Liturgie", *OCP* 3 (1937), pp. 5-48; F. Graffin, "Recherches sur le thème de l'église épouse dans les liturgies et littérature patristique de la langue syriaque", *L' Orient Syrien* 3 (1958), pp. 317-336; J-G. van Overstraeten, "Les liturgies nuptiales des églises de langue syriaque et le mystère de l'église-épouse", *Parole de l'Orient* 8 (1977-78), pp. 235-310; R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom. A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Combridge, reprt 1977), pp. 131-142; S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye. The Spiritual World Vision of St Ephrem* (Rome 1985), pp. 92-106.
17. S. J. Beggiani, *Early Syriac Theology*, p. 79.
18. R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 131-142; see n 16.
19. CNis 19:14.
20. R. A. Darling, "The Church from the Nations", pp. 113-120.
21. G. Saber, *La théologie baptismale de saint Ephrem* (Kaslik 1974), pp. 51-68.
22. S. J. Beggiani, *Early Syriac Theology*, p. 79; G. Saber, *La théologie baptismale*, p. 51.
23. R. Murray, "The Lance which Re-opened Paradise, A Mysterious Reading in the Early Syriac Fathers", *OCP* 39 (1973), pp. 224-234, 491; S. Brock, "The Mysteries Hidden in the Side of Christ", *Sobornost* 7 (1978), pp. 462-472.
24. HdN 3:15;20 = K. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian. Hymns* (New York 1989), pp. 86-88.

Blessed is the Shepherd Who became the sheep for our absolution.

Blessed is the Vineshoot that became the cup of our salvation.

Blessed also is the Cluster, the source of the medicine of life.

Blessed also is the Ploughman Who Himself became
the grain of wheat that was sown²⁵ and the sheaf that was reaped.

He is the Master Builder Who became a tower of our refuge.

Blessed is the Physician who descended and cut painlessly
and healed the sores with a mild Medicine.

His Child was the Medicine that takes pity on sinners.

Blessed is the One Who dwelt in the womb, and in it He built
a palace in which to live, a temple in which to be,
a garment in which to be radiant, and armor by which to conquer.

Church is the same as the totality of sacraments and thus the ongoing salvific sacrament of Christ. "... for the Syriac Fathers the Church has primarily a twofold aspect: on the one hand it manifests itself in the sacraments, Baptism and the Eucharist, on the other it represents the totality of its individual members. The tension between these two different facets (are) important and meaningful ... The Church, represented by the sacraments, is the means of sanctification of the Church, represented by her individual members."²⁶ Since there is only one Christ who is the only one Priest who celebrates the only one Eucharist there is only one Church. But whenever He gathers together a community of the New People of God for the celebration of the eucharist there is a local Church which fully manifests the only one Church. Mar Abdisho writes in his *Margānithā*: "The term 'Church' imports a congregation, and an assembly met

together to unite in acts of celebration. It is a model of things above ... for Christ does not call material foundations and stones 'a Church', but the congregation which believes in Him."²⁷

Clement of Alexandria speaks about the unity and uniqueness of the Church: "There is one true Church, the really ancient Church, into which are enrolled those who are righteous according to God's ordinance... The one Church is violently split up by the heretics into many sects. In essence, in idea, in origin, in pre-eminence we say that the ancient Catholic Church is the only church. This Church brings together, by the will of the one God through the one Lord, into the unity of the one faith which is according to the respective covenants... those who were already appointed... The pre-eminence of the church, just as the origin of its constitution, depends on its absolute unity; it excels all other things, and had no equal or rival"²⁸

25. Jn 12:24.

26. S. P. Brock, *Studies in Syriac Spirituality* (n. pl. 1983), p. 69.

27. G. P. Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, vol. II (London rept 1987), pp. 402-403.

28. H. Bettenson, *The Early Christian Fathers. A Selection from the writings of the Fathers from St. Clement of Rome to St. Athanasius* (Oxford rept 1990), p. 179.

The Self-Unfolding Church.

In the celebration of the eucharist the Church becomes what she is;²⁹ she unfolds herself in a transhistorical manner. She is in sacred time and ordinary time at the same time.³⁰ “For Ignatius, the structure of the Church is defined in terms of the Eucharist and, therefore, eschatology. Gathered for the Eucharist, the local community becomes the Catholic Church—not a part or a segment, but the plenitude”.³¹ Time and timelessness meet and merge together in liturgy. The Church realizes that she is not yet until the types and shadows give way to reality. She exists in a moment that has joined together past, present and future. She re-lives her past; she lives in her present; she fore-lives her future. This is what Zizioulas describes as “the memory of the future”.³² Thus we can say that the Church is three-dimensional in nature. Liturgy is the celebration and realization of the three-dimensional self-definition of the Church.

There is a dynamic tension between the Church and the Kingdom. Church is the Kingdom, but not yet fully. “The holy Church has two lives: one in time and the other in eternity”.³³ The Kingdom of God is foreshadowed in and through the Church on earth.

It is here and now, but not yet! Hence salvation history goes on until the end of our history. Eschatological and eucharistic dimension of the Church is expounded by Ignatius, Irenaeus and Ephrem.³⁴ According to Theodore of Mopsuestia and Maximus the Confessor eucharist is the *eikōn* of the heavenly kingdom.³⁵ Harmony within the Church is essential in attaining to the ever-coming Kingdom. “Church is therefore an interim stage, itself symbolic of the kingdom; this relationship establishes a vocation and a challenge to the Church rather than an automatic guarantee”.³⁶

Church is a mystery and sacrament³⁷ that is being revealed. The three-dimensional nature or the interaction between past, present and future of the Church has serious consequences in our theological perspectives. The Church cannot live in the present alone forgetting her past and neglecting her future. There is no way she can restrict herself into any particular place or particular time. On the other hand she can and she should reveal herself, realize herself in particular time and particular place. It is a challenge to live the past, present and future without being limited to any one of these dimensions. In other words, it is an existence that is rooted

29. P. Yousif, *L'Eucharistie chez saint Ephrem de Nisibe* (OCA 224, Rome 1984). pp. 233–253.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 357–367.
31. J. Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church* (New York 1983), p. 90.
32. J. D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London 1985), p. 180
33. Gregory the Great, *In Ezech. II:10*.
34. J. Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church*, pp. 89–93; P. Yousif, *L'Eucharistie chez saint Ephrem de Nisibe*, pp. 367–374.
35. G. Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (London 1971), pp. 73, 117–119, 153; E. Mazza, *Mystagoggy. A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age* (New York 1989), pp. 72–85.
36. R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 244.
37. T. Bou Mansour, *La pensée symbolique de saint Ephrem le syrien* (Kaslik 1983), pp. 311–406.

in the past living in the present and going to the future.

Church has to be, as Bernard says “*ante et retro oculata*, looking both forward and backward”³⁸ at the same time. “The church (or the churches) will be polarized by the future, by the call to which they must respond. This is certainly eschatology, but it is an eschatology which gives history its meaning and its tasks. Specifically, the two principles of these tasks are mission and ecumenism”.³⁹ Future is anticipated; past is available in anamnesis; present is a reality and background. *Retro oculata* “is neither pre-occupation with the past nor an inability to move, but a matter of Christian identity, of the continuity of the church with its roots or its source. The roots and source must be seen to be the ‘reality’ of the church as the people of God, body of Christ, living temple of the Holy Spirit. These cannot be reduced to what exegetes can derive from canonical texts: they are the reality of the river, the total *traditum*”.⁴⁰

The Liturgical Existence of the Church

Past, present and future meet together, converge in the everyday life of the Church. This realisation happens in and through the celebration of the liturgy. The Church ceases to be what she is when she does not become the anamnesis of the salvation history. She exists to celebrate and live the salvation and life in Christ. “The climax of salvation history is this marriage-feast on High. But in

and through liturgy the Church is being led into the heavenly bridal chamber. The most important activity of the Church is the celebration of liturgy”.⁴¹ That is why we do not have a theology apart from the liturgical praxis. Fossilization of ecclesial boundaries is a historical degeneration that has set in because of linguistic, cultural, geographic limitations and other individualistic factors. Realizing herself in one time and one place does not and should not mean that the Church is confined to that particular time and place. Without being multiple she is realized in time and space. She is far more than what she is able to grasp. Since she is a mystery that is not yet realized fully, she is a pilgrim whose goal is far ahead.

Aphrahat says that Christ is many in His members; but there is only one Christ; divine indwelling and Eucharist makes this plurality a oneness. Many become one in Christ⁴² and thus this plurality is leading towards unity in multiplicity according to Paul: “The cup of blessing which we bless is it not communion (koinonia) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not a communion (koinonia) of the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf”.⁴³ The same teaching we hear in *Didache*: “Just as this bread was scattered all over the hills and having been brought together was made one, so let your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth in your Kingdom”.⁴⁴ Cyril of Alexandria explains this further: “We all partake

38. Y. Congar, *Diversity and Communion*, p. 164.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

41. See my “An Ecclesiology in the Syriac Tradition”, p. 140.

42. 2 Cor 11:2; Gal 3:28; Eph 2:15-16.

43. 1 Cor 10:16-17.

44. *Didache* 9:4; see also 10:5.

of one loaf, and so we are all made into one body: for Christ cannot be divided. Therefore the Church is called the 'Body of Christ, of which each individual is a member'⁴⁵ as Paul understands. For we are all united to the one Christ, by means of his holy body since we take him, the one and indivisible, in our own bodies".⁴⁶

Both baptism and eucharist are related to Christ's body; so too incarnation and crucifixion and all that follows those salvific events. Baptism and eucharist constitute the body of Christ which we call the Church. Eucharist is the celebration of the body of Christ – the baptized Christians along with risen Christ – the participation in the wedding feast of Church the crowned Bride and Christ the heavenly Bridegroom. "The Eucharist not only remembers, it also prepares, awaits, and anticipates".⁴⁷ Church is the continuation of Christ's body. It is Christ's Eucharistic Body that makes us the body.⁴⁸ "Be zealous to assemble more frequently to celebrate eucharist⁴⁹ and give praise to God".⁵⁰ The eucharistic assembly is the local church and it is fully catholic; ultimately there is only one eucharistic assembly, one Church, and it is the one whose Priest is Christ.

The centrality of the eucharistic celebration is fundamental to the very nature of the Church.⁵¹ "...Syriac, Latin and Greek Churches agree that the eucharist is the foundation, the reason for unity, means of life and growth of the Church...Eucharist sums up the past, present and future of the Church...It is in the celebration of eucharist the Church expresses herself, finds her very face".⁵² The Fathers of the Church were keen to point out the existential relation between eucharist and the eucharistic assembly. "For many of the Fathers, the eucharistic assembly is thus an image of the Church, the people of God assembled with their Head both receiving and awaiting their final redemption".⁵³ Irenaeus maintains "the Ignatian idea of eucharistic catholicity in each local community".⁵⁴ Eucharist is "the Mystery in which each local church becomes really and fully the Catholic Church".⁵⁵ The local church as well as the whole Church is the single body, the one and only crowned bride of Christ. "No local church can be 'catholic' in isolation".⁵⁶ There is no conflict or contradiction between the local church and the universal Church, precisely because there is only one Christ, one Priest, one Eucharist and one eucharistic assembly in the

45. 1 Cor 12:27.

46. H. Bettenson, *The Later Christian Fathers*, p. 267.

47. J. Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church*, p. 86.

48. See my "An Ecclesiology in the Syriac Tradition", p. 141.

49. The term *eucharistein* is a clear indication.

50. Ignatius, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 13.

51. H. de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum L'Eucharistie et L'Eglise au Moyen Age. Etude historique* (Théologie 3, Paris 2 ed. 1949), pp. 279–294.

52. See my "An Ecclesiology in the Syriac Tradition", p. 140.

53. R. J. Halliburton, "The Partristic Theology of the Bucharist", *The Study of Liturgy*, edd. C. Jones et al. (London rev. ed. 1922), p. 246.

54. J. Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church*, p. 91.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

ultimate analysis. Hence it is the unique Body of Christ who is many in His members. This Body remains to be the sole foundation for the unity of all members as well as all gatherings assembled around His heavenly banqueting table, as taught by Ephrem:⁵⁷

In a very new way His body
has been fused with our bodies,
And His pure blood
has been poured into our veins.
His voice, too in our ears
and His splendour in our eyes.
The whole of Him with the whole
of us
is fused by His mercy.
And because He loved His Church
greatly,
He did not give her the manna
of her rival;
He became the Bread of Life
for her to eat Him.

The eucharistic assembly is a shadow of the heavenly wedding-feast of Christ and the Church; and hence we are still waiting for the full realization of our gathering. Both the Church and the soul await the Bridegroom, and the marriage at Cana was a type of the eucharist:⁵⁸

Jesus, You were invited to the
wedding-feast of others,
here is Your own pure and fair
wedding-feast: gladden Your
rejuvenated people,
for Your guests too, O Lord, need
Your songs; let Your harp utter!
The soul is Your (bride, the body
Your) bridal chamber,

Koonammakkal Thoma Kathanar

Your guests are the senses and
the thoughts.
And if a single body is a wedding-
feast for You,
how great is Your banquet for
the whole Church!
Let Cana thank You⁵⁹ for bring-
ing joy to her wedding-feast.
The bridegroom's crown honours
You, since You honoured him,
and the bride's crown shall adorn
Your victory.
In Cana's mirror parables find
their explanation,
for in the bride You depicted
Your church,
and in Cana's guests are those
invited by You marked out,
and in its festivity You depicted
Your own coming.
(...)

Together with my guests I will
give thanks because He has
held me worthy to invite Him-
He who is the heavenly bridegroom
who has come down and in-
vited all,
and I too have been invited to
enter His pure wedding-feast.
Among men on earth I shall
acknowledge Him as bride-
groom, and that there none
beside.

His bridal chamber is established
for eternity,
And His wedding-feast is provided
with riches and is needful
of nothing-
not like my own feast, whose
shortcomings He has fulfilled!
(...)

Let the wilderness thank Him who
in it multiplied bread⁶⁰
the hungry were satisfied⁶¹ and

57. HdV 37:2 = R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 77.
 58. HdF 14:4-5 = S. Brock, *The Harp of the Spirit. Eighteen Poems of Saint Ephrem* (London 2ed. 1983), p. 19.
 59. HdV 33: 1. 3. 6-7 = S. Brock, *The Harp of the Spirit*, pp. 52-54.
 60. Jn 6: 5ff.
 61. Jn 6: 26.

what they left over they took as provisions for the road.
 Those provisions that they brought proclaimed You in their towns.
 Your barley bread⁶² is more to be desired than bread from the king's table.
 Happy he who is worthy to eat it, happy too he, who in his wonder eats not, simply gazing at You, our Lord, in wonder.
 The two boats⁶³ are filled with parables, symbolizing the hands and feet, ears and eyes, showing how ears should be filled with truth at all times, and eyes be filled always with purity; how the hands should hold Your Body and feet tread Your house, and how they should all be to Your praise.

The Way from Paradise to Paradise

The unfolding of salvation history which runs through Christianity is not just a religion; instead, it is the Way, the Royal Highway as depicted by Ephrem.⁶⁴

Who is ever so mad as to seek without light,
 Both to search without bright light,
 And grope without a flash of light?

The foolish scribes went out of the Scriptures, To wander into a pathless desert, And they left the Testament: The Way⁶⁵ of the Kingdom—Prophets were its milestones, Apostles, its inns. Milestones were erected on the Way of the King. Fools have left it and they adhere to a pathless desert; And behold! they wander in it. Anyone who travels by the Way of the King, He is the one travelling to meet the King, And (to receive) His gift.⁶⁶ Plain is the Way for the simple ones, That (Way) which is faith, A beaten (track), of inns and milestones, From Paradise to Paradise; For, through Adam – the exit, And with the robber⁶⁷ – the return.⁶⁸ For the sake of the fruit He laid the Way Which runs from the Tree right to the Cross; It extended from the Wood to the Wood And from Eden to Zion, From Zion to the Holy Church And from the Church to the Kingdom.⁶⁹

Odes of Solomon, Acts of Judas Thomas, Aphrahat and Ephrem make use of the imagery of sea, ship and

62. Jn 6: 13

63. Lk 5: 7.

64. HdF 65: 1

65. E. Beck, "Das Bild vom Weg mit Meilensteinen und Herbergen bei Ephräm", *Oriens Christianus* 65 (1981), pp. 1-39.

66. HdF 66: 23-24.

67. Lk 23.43.

68. HcH 22:8.

69. HcH 26:4 = R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 247

voyage.⁷⁰ The Church remains to be the ark of salvation; it is sailing smoothly over the waters of the flood. It is built on the baptismal waters; the Spirit of Christ is guiding its course.

By its course it portrayed the sign of its Protector, the cross of its Mariner, the wood of the Sailor, who was coming to build for us the Church amid the waters, and in the name of the Three to deliver its inhabitants. The Spirit in the place of the dove was to minister its anointing, and the symbol of His salvation. Praise to the (Ark's) Saviour!⁷¹

The nostalgic description of a paradisiac Church is a key theme in Aphrahat and Ephrem:⁷²

God planted the fair Garden
He built the pure Church;⁷³
upon the Tree of Knowledge
He established the injunction ...
In the Church He implanted the
Word ...
The assembly of saints
bears resemblance to Paradise:
in it each day is plucked
the fruit of Him who gives life
to all;
in it, my brethren, is trodden

the cluster of grapes, to be the Medicine of Life ...
Among the saints none is naked, for they have put on glory,⁷⁴
nor is any clad in those leaves
or standing in shame,
for they have found, through our Lord,
the robe that belongs to Adam and Eve.
As the Church purges her ears
of the serpent's poison,
those who had lost their garments,
having listened to it and became diseased,
have now been renewed and whitened.

The effortless power,
the arm which never tires,
planted this Paradise,
adorned it without effort.
But it is the effort of free will
that adorns the Church with
all manner of fruits.
The Creator saw the Church
and was pleased;
He resided in that Paradise
which she had planted for His honour,
just as He had planted the Garden for her delight.
No one is excluded from this Paradise, except those who choose to remain outside. But their entry is

70. E. R. Hambye, "The Symbol of the 'coming to the harbour' in the Syriac Tradition", *Symposium Syriacum* 1972 (OCA 197, Rome 1974), pp. 401-411
R. Murray, *The Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 249-253; B. Lorenz "Zur Seefahrt des Lebens in den Gedichten des Gregor von Nazianz" *Vig Chr* 33 (1979), pp. 234-241.

71. HdF 49:4 = R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 253.

72. HdP 6:7-10 = S. Brock, *Saint Ephrem. Hymns on Paradise. Introduction and translation* (Crestwood 1990), pp. 111-112.

73. Eph 5:25-27.

74. S. Brock, "Clothing metaphors as a means of theological expression in Syriac Tradition", *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter*, ed. M. Schmidt, (Eichstätter Beiträge 4, Regensburg 1982), pp. 11-38.

conditioned on their attitude to the Church which is the type of the Paradise to come:⁷⁵

The trouble-makers who make trouble here (in the Church)
Will not enter that Kingdom
(*malkūtā*)
Those who have raised up stifes
Will not euter that Garden of
Peace (*ganat šaynā*)
This Church of Truth
The image (*dmūtā*) it is of that
Kingdom.
For it is right that just as
There was harmony in the
Kingdom.
Thus in that Church of Truth
There should be harmony.

Though the banquet of the paradisiac Church is not in this world, the eucharistic features are more than clear:⁷⁶

And for those who do the will of
God
the gate is opened and the Way
is well-trodden,
the Spring is flowing and giving
drink to the thirsty,
the Table is laid and the Marriage-
feast prepared.
The fatted ox is slain and the
Cup of Salvation mixed;
The Banquet is prepared, the
Bridegroom has arrived to take
His place;
The Apostles have issued the
invitations and right many are
called.
O Elect, prepare yourselves!

In the *Book of the Cave of Treasures* we have a similar description of the Church: "Now Eden is the Holy Church, and the Church is the compassion of God, which He has

to extend to the children of men... Eden is the Holy Church, and the Paradise which was in it is the Land of Rest, and inheritance of Life, which God has prepared for all the holy children of men. And because Adam was priest and king and prophet, God brought him to paradise that he might minister in Eden, the Holy Church..."⁷⁷

Ephrem sees a parallelism between Church and the three levels of Paradise, three decks of the Ark of Noah, three steps of mount Sinai. *The Book of Steps* is unique in the sense that it has a theology of the Church at three levels: visible Church, hidden Church and Church in heaven. Visible Church is the sacrament of the invisible Church which is in the individual human heart. It is the visible communion and totality of the invisible Church. Both these look towards the heavenly Church, thus forming sacraments of the latter. These three Churches are intimately interrelated and each one of them is essential. One is looking towards the other for its own completion and identity. It is a trinity and it is inseparable in reality. Our visible Church is the icon of the heavenly Church. The author of the *Book of Steps* is keen to assert the significance of the visible and institutional Church:⁷⁸

But if we doubt and despise this visible Church, this visible altar, this visible priesthood and this (visible) baptism which effects atonement, our body will not be a temple, nor our heart an altar and a wellspring of praise; nor will we have revealed to us that Church on High... This visible Church is manifest to all; our Lord established its altar, its

75. SdF 6:321-330.

76. Dem VI 265.23-268.6 = R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* p. 256.

77. R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 261.

78. *Ibid.*, pp. 265-266.

baptism and its priesthood... It is the Church in truth, the blessed mother which brings up all children, and the body and the heart in which our Lord dwells; and because of the Spirit which abides in it, it is in truth a temple and altar, because our Lord dwells there... Because... (it is the likeness of the Church in heaven) this (visible) Church is greater than all things, and she is the mother of all the baptized; but especially because the face of our Lord dawns on her and illuminates her... Now this Church, with its altar and baptism, bears mankind like children; they suck her milk, till they are weaned ... Therefore let us not despise the visible Church, for she it is who brings up all children; nor let us despise that of the heart, for it is she who gives strength to all the infirm: but let us long for that on high, which perfects all the saints ... and without this visible Church no one will be in that of the heart and that on high. If anyone separates himself from her and 'ministers at the mountain' he becomes guilty or goes wrong. But wherever he is, he is sure that life is in her, and let him not break his covenant.

Concern for Unity

The Church is realized in and through the churches without any conflict; whenever and wherever there are conflicts and divisions the churches are unable to represent and realize the Church and Kingdom. Instead the churches give counter-witness to all

what she is by baptism and eucharist. In the fourth century Syriac Church Ephrem was aware of the need for unity in the churches so that Church may become what she is. The Church of Edessa speaks through him:⁷⁹

O Physician, display
thy skill in my members,
and fasten and fix
those cut off from my body;
let them appear to all eyes
as though never cut off!
Since the Evil one exults in my
fault
and mocks at my members,
enhance their beauty
that he, embittered by his
ugliness,
may repent of his efforts,
when he sees how fair I have
become!
May God teach (us) by his testing
not to renew the suffering!
I am in pain from being cut
and from their being cut off.
May we learn by our healing at
last,
that we may not perish!
(...)

As for me in my misery
intercede, O Church;
I have grieved for thy divisions,
may I rejoice in thy reunion!
and with thee and under thy
protection
may I enter the Kingdom!

The harmony that existed among the animals in the ark of Noah symbolizes the unity of the Church.⁸⁰ The Church is a mother who weeps for her divided children.⁸¹ Ephrem prays for his enemies and even for the heretics who split the Church.⁸² With Ephrem's prayer for general Church unity and peace we conclude:⁸³

79. CNis 26:3-5.7 = R. Murray, "St Ephrem on Church Unity", p. 170

80. See Hde 51:2-3.

81. CNis 26-29.

82. R. Murray, "St Ephrem on Church Unity", p. 173-175.

83. HdF 52:15 = R. Murray, "St Ephrem on Church Unity", p. 175.

The Syro Malabar Church as a Major Archbishopric

On the 29th of January 1993 at 12 p.m. the announcement was made in Rome and simultaneously in Kerala by the Apostolic pronuncio that the Holy Father John Paul II, has graciously erected the SyroMalabar Church as a Major Archbishopric and has appointed Cardinal Mar Antony Padiyara, Archbishop of Ernakulam, as the first Major Archbishop.¹ The faculties of pastoral governance (as the announcement says (Osservatore Romano, 3 February 1993) are reserved to the Holy See and are to be exercised for the present by Archbishop Mar Abraham Kattumana, Apostolic Nuncio in Benin.

I. Common Expectation Realized

1. Everybody in the Syro Malabar Church was convinced that the Church, being of apostolic origin, dynamic in life and second only to the Ukrainian Church numerically, highly deserves to be raised to a Major Archiepiscopate if not a patriarchate. The Holy See, as is seen for some time, does not establish new patriarchates. The possibility, however, of establishing new

patriarchates where necessary is clearly stated in the Decree on Oriental Catholic Churches. "In as much as the patriarchal office is a traditional form of government in the Eastern Church, this sacred and ecumenical Council earnestly desires that where needed, new patriarchates should be erected".² Cardinal Josep Slypij of the Ukrainian Church claimed himself to be a patriarch and said that the Ukrainian Church is a patriarchate. The Holy See, however, did not grant this prerogative to the Ukrainian Church. The reasons might be varied. But the Council was emphatic in asserting that where necessary, new patriarchates could or should be erected. Although we do not have any evidence to prove our contention, it seems probable that the thought of the patriarchates asking for more and more autonomy could have been a reason why the Holy See is reluctant to establish new patriarchates.

At present there are six catholic patriarchates for the Eastern catholics. They are: the Antiochean, the Maronite, the Alexandrian (Coptic), the Byzantine (Melkite), the Armenian and the

1. L'osservatore Romano, 3rd February 1993.
2. OE. n. II.

O Lord, make peace
in my days in Thy Churches,
and unite and join, O Lord,
the quarrelling sects;
pacify and reconcile
the conflicting parties,

and from all churches there be
a single Church of Truth;
and let her children be gathered
righteous in her bosom,
that we may confess Thy goodness—
praise to Thy reconciliation!

Chaldean patriarchs. With the elevation of the Syro Malabar Church as a Major Archiepiscopal Church, there are two such Churches: the Ukrainian and the Syro Malabar. In the western (latin) Church there are patriarchates, but they are titular such as the patriarch of Goa (East Indies), of West Indies (Spain) of Venice of Jerusalem. The Roman patriarch (the Pope) seems to be the only western patriarch who has jurisdictional powers outside his eparchy. The orthodox christians have many patriarchates, specially in the Greek tradition. When the national churches declared themselves independent of Rome, (many of them) called themselves patriarchates.

II. What it means

2. The major Archbishop is a title that exists only among catholic orientals³ Cardinal Acacio Coussa, the noted canonist, who was the Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches coined the word and the institution. It is practically the same as the patriarch except for a few differences, such as the confirmation of the Supreme Pontiff required when a Major Archbishop is elected.⁴ The patriarch need only to communicate his election to the Supreme Pontiff and ask for ecclesiastical communion.⁵ Major Archbishop has in practice, all

the rights and prerogatives of the patriarch himself. The practice of obtaining confirmation by the Supreme Pontiff may be cited as another example of centralization by Rome. The fact is that there has been evolution of the doctrine on papacy and the present structure does not want to abdicate the powers the papacy has acquired in the course of centuries. 3. Patriarch's is a juridical office and the patriarch enjoys jurisdiction over the whole Church over which he presides. He is the Father and Head of his Church. The present situation in which the Supreme Pontiff has reserved the power over the Syro Malabar faithful outside the two metropolitan provinces is a temporary and ad hoc adjustment. Although the Major Archbishop's jurisdiction is now limited to the two provinces of Ernakulam and Changanacherry,⁶ this is not a situation which the law envisages. Another difference that is not generally given stress is the fact that while both the patriarch and Major Archbishop have jurisdiction in the Church over which they preside, the mode of jurisdiction is different from that of the hierarch in his eparchy or the Roman Pontiff in the whole Church. The power of the hierarch in his eparchy as also of the Roman Pontiff in the universal Church is immediate, whereas the

3. The tradition of the Chaldean Church speaks of the Catholicos, and not of the patriarch. "Hodie, in Ecclesia Catholica, non est Praesul qui titulo catholici decoretur quin sit Patriarcha (cfr. Patriarcha Armenorum et Chadeorum qui Catholici titulum retinent" (Epitome, op. cit. p. 209).

4. c. 153 § 2 of CCEO

4 a. In huius instituti ortu Catholici universalem (unde nomen) exercebant iurisdictionem sicut Patriarchae, Exarchae et Archiepiscopi. Catholicus ordinationem a primo in diocesi Episcopo (Patriarcha) recipiebat, eis in divinis officiis commemorationem facere, eique aliquando tributum solvere, debebat. Cito tamen Catholicus absolutam independentiam adeptus est a Patriarcha. Famous Catholici among the Chaldeans are: Timothy I (780-823). Catholicus Jahbalaha I, Catholicus Dadjesu I.

5. c. 76 § 2 of CCEO

6. Communication of the Holy See, cfr. Deivarajam, vol. 32, February 93 p. 29.

patriarch and the Major Archbishop have the power as mediate, i. e. they exercise their power through the hierarch and not directly on persons or institutions. In the mode of exercising their jurisdiction in the Church over which they preside, the Major Archbishop and Patriarch act similarly, except in their own eparchies where the jurisdiction, naturally, is direct. That the jurisdiction of patriarchs and therefore also of Major Archbishops is mediate is given by cardinal Coussa: "Potestas patriarchae est mediata i. e. non exercenda in fideles et clericos episcopis inferiores, nisi per Episcopos, firmis canonibus qui tribuunt patriarchis immediatum iurisdictionis exercitium, puta ad suppendum alicuius Episcopi negligentiae vel ad admittendos recursus etc."⁷ (Coussa, *Epitome Praelectionum de Iure Ecclesiastico Orientali*, vol. I, Götterferrata, p. 256). This is clear from can. 89f CCEO (when it is seen that a cleric merits punishment, his hierarch is first to be warned), can. 90 (a stauropegium is to be established in consultation with the eparchial bishop), can. 89 § 3 (in case of conferring a dignity on a cleric of another eparchy), etc.

The patriarchal institution is very old in the Church. By the term "Eastern Patriarch" is meant a bishop who has jurisdiction over all the bishops (including metropolitans, clergy and faithful of his own territory or rite, according to the norm of law and without prejudice to the primacy of the Roman Pontiff.⁸ The ancient patriarchates were Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. Theologians began to speak about the "Pentarchy", the rule of the

five patriarchs. Theodore the Studite, about the year 800, spoke about the five-pinnacled body of the Church, "the true Councils are those accepted by all five patriarchs. The power given to Peter (Mt. 16:19) belongs in concrete to the successors of the apostles and the five patriarchs". Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople, a contemporary of Theodore explicitly recognizes the primacy of Rome among the patriarchs. "They represent the whole Church in its ordinary jurisdiction"⁹ and govern all the Churches just as the five senses govern the body.¹⁰ The patriarchal power consisted in the right of appeal, the right of annulment and sometimes the right of intervention in the internal affairs of the province. The patriarchs consecrated the metropolitans in their respective areas. Outside the territory of the Roman empire, comparable to patriarchates, catholicates were formed in Persia, Armenia, and Georgia.¹¹

But during the Crusades, the latin Church established patriarchates parallel to those of the orientals. However, these patriarchates did not have the jurisdictional power of the eastern patriarchates. Such were the patriarchates of East Indies, West Indies, Venice etc. With the formation of national churches, the eastern orthodox Churches established patriarchates. This was specially to be seen in the Byzantine East: the Bulgarian, Rumanian, Serbian, Russian etc. Today while there are 6 catholic patriarchates in the catholic east, there are about 16 patriarchates for the eastern orthodox churches.

7. Coussa A. *Epitome Praelectionum de Iure Canonico Orientali*, vol. I

8. *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* n. 7.

9. Bernard Schultze, "Eastern Churches" quoted by John E Lynch CSP in *The Jurist*, 1991, 1, p. II

10. *Ibid.* p. 11.,

11. *The Jurist*, 1991, 1. p. 11

III. Positive Consequences

4. It would be good to think of a few advantages of Cardinal Antony Padiyara becoming the Major Archbishop:

a) People now think that the Major Archbispopric is an honour above that of the Cardinal. From a jurisdictional aspect, this is quite true. While the Cardinalate is an honour, the Major Archbishop, like a patriarch is father and head of a Church. Cardinal Padiyara has been bishop, Archbishop, Cardinal and now major Archbishop. A person is promoted from a lower position to a higher position. However, if the major Archbishop was made a Cardinal, the ordinary people might have thought that the Cardinalate is a higher dignity than the Major Archbispopric.

b) Major Archbispopric is something non-existent in the latin West. This title is exclusively of the eastern catholic churches. The individuality of the Syro Malabar Church as an individual Church, different from the latin Church, has been vindicated. It cannot any more be said that the Syro Malabar Church is a part of the "universal" (sic) latin Church.

c) The accusation that if the liturgy is represtinated, the Syro Malabar Church will become under the Chaldean Church has been proved to be false.

d) Now that every child of the Syro Malabar Church knows that it has an individuality of its own, the search to deepen this individuality will naturally continue. At present, the faithful only know that it has a specific individuality, but are not sure in what it consists. But dispassionate

study and research will deepen the conviction and will clarify what specifically the liturgy, spirituality, discipline and theology of this apostolic Church consists in. Discipline is only one aspect of the individuality and that too has not been fully vindicated. The question of the palliyogam, the alt India jurisdiction of the Archdeacon will all have to be settled if the individuality is to be fully established. 5. As to the origin of Major Archiepiscopate, the term is comparatively new and is used only by Catholic Orientals. It is applied to heads of eastern catholic Churches who are not patriarchs.¹² The first appointment of a Major Archbishop comes from the Supreme Pontiff, just as that of patriarch. As Coussa testifies, in the Synod of Chacedon, all the Archbishops were called major metropolitans, but the name Major Archbishop was not used.¹³

IV The Situation

6. The announcement of the Major Archbispopric has been widely welcomed by the entire Syro Malabar Church. It is a juridical position long overdue to this very ancient and active catholic church. There was however, those who strongly argued that the juridical status should be given to the Church after coming to an agreement on the liturgy which is the rule of faith for any church. The Holy See also seemed first to be moving in this direction. But the popular feeling was that if the juridical structure is had, liturgy could be agreed upon easily. Rome, seems to have accepted this position.

While the juridical structure has been granted to the Syro Malabar Church, a few important matters have been reserved to the Holy See namely,

12. c. 151. Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium.

13. Coussa A. op. cit., p. 283.

the question of liturgy and the appointment of bishops. The Church, therefore, notwithstanding the continuing pressure of certain groups, has decided to reserve these questions for itself. This means that the Holy See considers the question as of great importance and that the liturgical question is not to be resolved by popular vote. If this were so, the whole matter could have been left to the Synod of bishops. This is a food for thought for the children of the Syro Malabar Church. In establishing the Major Archiepiscopate, the individuality of the Syro Malabar Church has been accepted and vindicated by the Supreme Authority of the Church. But individuality is constituted by discipline, theology, spirituality and liturgy. What has been granted is a partial juridical completion. The Archdeacon had very vast powers. Being the representative of the whole Church, he had wide and far reaching powers which is restricted, at least for the present. Individuality will be established when the Church becomes conscious of its spirituality and theology and lives it., when it lives its rich oriental liturgy. Without these factors being re-established, there is no meaning in saying that the Church has received its due position.

V. Obligations incumbent on the Church

7. The Syro Malabar Church has to make its contribution to the universal Church. This, it will be able to do in as far as it establishes its individuality and lives it. It has a definite and positive contribution to make to the universal Church.

8. As an oriental Church, all the more, the Syro Malabar Church has also an ecumenical dimension. Only when we are genuinely oriental can we witness to the fact that the Church respects all the Churches and their liturgies. Thus the incense, the veil, the bema – all have great ecumenical significance.

Just like what Pope Paul VI said in the first Plenary of CICO (Codex Iuris Canonici Orientalis Recognoscendo) in March 1973, the new Code has to be oriental and ecumenical, so every eastern Church has to be genuinely oriental and ecumenical.

9. The Major Archiepiscopate, while it is an honour given to the Syro Malabar Church, it also asks the children of this ancient apostolic Church to study deep its individuality in its liturgy, spirituality and theology and live them. With the erection of the Major Archiepiscopate in the matter of discipline, the Church has acquired its partial individuality. For, even in the appointment of bishops, the matter is reserved to the Holy See. This is besides taking into consideration the question of liturgy and the jurisdiction of the Major Archbishop in which matters also there is restriction. As a rule, the Major Archbishop or the patriarch has jurisdiction over all the members of a "sui juris" Church. We do not enter into the details of these points. However, with the appointment of a Major Archbishop, the Syro Malabar Church has been recognized and implicitly declared an Oriental Church. This ancient Church has an individuality of its own. Unfortunately in the vicissitudes which it had to pass through in the course of centuries, it has lost the consciousness of its individuality. It has now to rediscover this individuality and to spell out in what it consists. Nobody can say any more that because the Church is catholic, every thing should be the same: liturgy, theology, spirituality and discipline. More and more catholics are coming to realize – and the situation is not different in India – that the unity of the Church is not uniformity, but unity in diversity. Therefore, liturgy, theology, spirituality and discipline of different Churches have necessarily to be different. The search into the individuality of the Church

has just started. However, nobody can any more stop this ongoing consciousness of the Church's identity.

10. The Chairman of the Pontifical Commission that visited Kerala in October last, Archbishop Thomas White explicitly said: Your Church is oriental of the East Syrian tradition. It is hoped that while the individuality of the Church has been recognized, all in our Church, including the hierarchs will agree to this, and work out the future of the Church in this direction. It is true that since the Vatican Council II, a lot of changes has come over in the attitude in the Church. Tody everybody admits that the Indian Catholic Church is constituted of three individual (*sui iuris*) Churches. At the time of the Council, such an idea was taboo even among some of the orientals. The urgent thing to do is to become conscious of the individuality

and to spell out this for all to know. Once the individuality of a Church is vindicated, it can justly ask to establish its rights even in jurisdictional matters. At present this is an arduous task and therefore without glamour. Those who fight to establish the individuality may have to become martyrs, not necessarily this happens because of ill will on the part of others, but because of ignorance. But there is no gainsaying that ultimately the enunciation of those who argue for the individuality of the Church will be vindicated. Truth triumphs, and truth makes us free. If there is anything we can glory in, it should be in the fact that we are on the side of truth, and that we live and die for truth.

The rights and obligations of patriarchs (Major Archbishops) would constitute a topic of study in itself and we do not want to deal with it here.

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Book Review

Sebastian Brock, *L’Oeil de Lumière: La Vision spirituelle de Saint Ephrem*, suivi de *La Harpe de l’Esprit: florilège de poèmes de Saint Ephrem*. Traduit de l’anglais et du syriaque par Didier Rance. Préface de Dom Louis Leloir [= *Spiritualité Orientale*, n° 50], F-49122 Bégrolles-en-Mauges (France): Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1991, 368 pp., 137 FF.

In 1984, Professor Brock, University of Oxford, gave the annual “Placid Lectures” [in honour of the late Professor Dr. Placid J. Podipara CMI] at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome for which he chose the title *The Luminous Eye: The spiritual world vision of St. Ephrem*. They were published in the following year by the C. I. I. S. in Rome which was then under the direction of Fr. Albert Nambiaparampil CMI. This book found a vivid interest among theologians and orientalists in many countries, and so it happened that, upon the proposal of Rev. Didier Rance, permanent deacon of the diocese of Metz [he is serving in the Roman and the Byzantine rites], who has lived in the Near East for a certain time and is now connected with the organization “Church in Need”, the Editions Monastiques of the Abbey of Bellefontaine have taken the decision to incorporate his French translation into their excellent collection *Spiritualité Orientale* in order to share the learned author’s insights with the French-speaking people all over the world. Added to the contents of the “Placid Lectures” are eighteen poems of St. Ephrem which Dr. Brock has translated for the first time and which were published under the title *The Harp of the Spirit: Eighteen Poems of St. Ephrem* in the “Studies complementary to *Sobornost*”, no. 4, London 1983. Welcoming this publication, we warmly recommend it not only to the French-speaking readers of this periodical.

J. Madey

News

The Syro-Malabar Church raised to Major Archiepiscopal Church

The Syro-Malabar Church, the Apostolic oriental Church of India, has been raised to a Major Archiepiscopal Church by the Holy Father John Paul II. The decree was promulgated in Rome and Cochin simultaneously on 29th January, 1993. The title of the See is Ernakulam- Angamaly with its seat at Ernakulam. At present it extends only to the existing Provinces of Ernakulam and Changanacherry.

The Holy Father has appointed Hs Eminence Mgr Antony Cardinal Padiyara as the First Major Archbishop and entrusted the governance temporarily to the Pontifical Delegate Abp. Abraham Kattumana who is the Pronuncio in Ghana, Benin and Togo.

By the decree of the Pope, the ancient, and Apostolic Church of St. Thomas has entered a decisive stage in its history. The forefathers of this church had fought hard to protect its patrimony and pleaded for its autonomy. Their dream has at least partially been realised. Now this Church has a common head. By giving it a head, Rome has entrusted it with a great responsibility to govern itself, to safeguard its patrimony and restore its genuine and authentic identity. However, the jurisdiction certain matters, namely, Liturgy, and appointment of bishops, has been reserved to Rome. Let us hope that his church will grow vigorously according to its identity, professing its patrimony. This has to express itself in its liturgy, spirituality, theology, discipline etc.

Commission for Church in Eastern Europe

H. H. Pope John Paul II has terminated the Pontifical Council for Russia and established a Permanent Interdicasterial Commission for the Church in Eastern Europe. The decree is issued on January 15, 1993. The new Commission will deal with both the Latin and Oriental rite Churches in Eastern Europe. It will be responsible for promoting the apostolic mission of the Catholic Church, for fostering ecumenical dialogue with the Orthodox and other Churches of Eastern tradition in the region. The Cardinal Secretary of state will preside over the Commission.

The Pontifical Commission for Catholic-Orthodox dialogue meet at Kottayam, India

The official representatives of the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Syrian Church of India met at Spirituality Centre, Manganam, Kottayam, India. The

meeting was organised by the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity. The discussions were held on 8-11 December, 1992. Hierarchs and Theologians from both Churches represented their Churches. The meeting felt the urgency of studying the common patrimony of these Churches before 16th c. and a sub commission committee was appointed with this purpose. Two other sub commissions were also appointed to make serious studies on episcopacy, inter church marriages, history of the Church etc. The next meeting is scheduled to be held on November 15-19, 1993 at Sophia Centre, Kottayam.

Abp. Pierre Duprey, the Secretary of Pontifical Council for Christian Unity Abp. Mar Joseph Powathil, Bp. Kuriakose Kunnamcherry, Philipos Mar Eusebios, Cyril Mar Baselios, Mathew Mar Severios, Fr. Ramban Theophorus, Fr. Bernard Dubaske Fr. Mathew Vellanickal, Fr. Xavier Koodapuzha, Fr. Jacob Kurian, Fr. Geevarghese Chediath, Fr. V. P. Varghese, Fr. M. O. John, Fr. John Mathews, P. C. Abraham and M. T. Paul attended the meeting.

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